



THE FRAGILITY OF JUDICIAL NEUTRALITY IN EU

COMPLIANCE VS. CONSCIENCE
Sidney Shelton

ALGORITHM IN ROBES
Jennifer Stephenson

RULING BY DEFIANCE
John Kato



JUSTICE VS. JUDICATURE

WHY THE BEST LAWS FAIL
UNDER THE WORST MEN



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editorial

There is an old and uncomfortable truth that has followed civilization since the first attempts to create systems of law, a society may possess the most carefully written laws, the most elegant constitutions and the most sophisticated legal traditions, yet still fail when those entrusted with interpreting and applying those laws lose sight of their purpose.

The words on the page do not deliver justice. People do. And that is where the most difficult questions begin.

The 35th issue of Ovi Thematic eMagazine theme, Justice vs. Judicature, was born from a concern that has become increasingly difficult to ignore, the growing distance between the idea of justice and the institutions created to protect it. The intention was not to attack the law, nor to question the necessity of courts, judges or legal systems. Quite the opposite. The purpose was to examine what happens when one of democracy's most essential foundations begins to show signs of weakness.

Justice is not merely a legal concept. It is a promise. It is the belief that decisions affecting human lives will be made with fairness, independence, and a commitment to principles greater than personal interest or political convenience. Judicature, on the other hand, is the human structure designed to carry that promise forward. It is where ideals meet reality and where the limitations, biases and ambitions of individuals can shape the outcome.

In recent years, the world has witnessed a growing discomfort with the role of courts and judges. Institutions once viewed as distant guardians of constitutional principles have increasingly become

part of political battles. Polarization has entered spaces that were expected to remain above political conflict. Prejudice, personal beliefs and ideological identities have influenced public perceptions of judicial decisions. The judge, once imagined as the neutral figure standing apart from the storm, is increasingly seen through the lens of the storm itself.

The developments surrounding the United States judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court during the era of Donald Trump's political influence, have become one of the most discussed examples of this broader global concern. The transformation of judicial appointments into political victories, the open celebration of ideological influence, and the perception that courts can become instruments of long-term political strategy have created a blueprint that many observers fear could be studied and repeated by authoritarian-minded leaders elsewhere.

But this issue is not about one country, one leader, or one political movement. It is about a much larger question: What happens when the institutions designed to protect democracy become vulnerable to the very forces they were created to restrain?

A democracy does not survive only because it has elections. It survives because it has limits. It survives because power is restrained, because rights are protected even when unpopular, and because institutions maintain enough independence to challenge those who hold authority. When those principles weaken, the damage is not always immediate. Sometimes it appears slowly, through small changes in expectations, through the normalization of practices that once seemed unacceptable, and through the gradual acceptance that justice can be shaped by whoever holds influence.

This issue may appear political at first glance. Some contributions may discuss political figures, political movements, or controversial decisions. But the foundation of this magazine is not partisan. It is not an argument for one side against another.

It is a reflection of concern. A concern that one of democracy's oldest promises that every individual should stand equal before the law, requires constant protection. A concern that justice cannot depend solely on the character of those temporarily holding power. A concern that the credibility of the judiciary is not preserved by authority alone, but by trust.

Courts ask citizens to respect their decisions. In return, citizens must believe that those decisions are made in pursuit of justice rather than influence.

That relationship is fragile. The contributors to this issue explore different perspectives on this tension: the gap between law and fairness, between authority and legitimacy, between the institution and the people who operate it. Their work reminds us that questioning the health of judicial systems is not an attack on democracy. It is one of the ways democracy protects itself.

Because justice is not automatic. It is something every generation must defend.

A big, BIG thank you to all the contributors who have shared their thoughts, concerns and perspectives in this important conversation.

Of course the magazine is adjoined with all the usual sections including fiction, poetry and art.

Hoping that this is an issue with a lot of food for thought,
enjoy the reading

Thanos Kalamidas





the world in light focus

A brief summary of significant political and cultural events from the past fifteen days.

World Youth Skills Day (July 15)

Society & Education | UN agencies and global vocational networks launched new initiatives targeting AI-driven workforce transformation, providing technical training programs tailored to youth in developing economies.

UN ECOSOC High-Level Ministerial Summit (July 15–16)

Diplomacy | Global leaders and ministers gathered at the United Nations in New York to conclude the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, focusing on accelerating regional implementation of the 2030 Agenda amidst global financial headwinds.

Conclusion of the 2026 FIFA World Cup (July 19)

Culture & Sports | MetLife Stadium hosted the final of the largest World Cup in history. Spain defeated Argentina 1–0 in extra time to claim their second world title, concluding a landmark tournament co-hosted across Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

UK Political Leadership Transition (July 20)

Politics | Following leadership elections within the Labour Party, Andy Burnham assumed office as Prime Minister of the United



Kingdom, succeeding Keir Starmer to navigate ongoing economic and post-Brexit trade strategies.

Global Premiere of Christopher Nolan's *The Odyssey* (July 17)

Pop Culture | One of the year's biggest cinematic releases hit global theaters as Christopher Nolan's star-studded adaptation of Homer's epic poem premiered worldwide.

75th Anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention (July 28)

Global Policy | The UNHCR marked 75 years of the landmark convention with special proceedings in Geneva, emphasizing global updates needed to address displacement driven by climate change and prolonged regional conflicts.

African Digital Financing Accord (July 30)

Development & Tech | Meeting in Addis Ababa, key African financial institutions and international partners announced a coordinated funding framework designed to scale connectivity and digital payments across sub-Saharan Africa.

US Strategic Critical Minerals Initiative (July 30–31)

Politics & Tech | The White House announced presidential actions invoking Title I of the Defense Production Act to expand domestic processing and supply-chain resilience for critical minerals necessary for green technology and defense manufacturing.

Ebola Outbreak Response in Central Africa (July 30)

Public Health | Health agencies mobilized emergency aid to the Democratic Republic of the Congo as the country faced an ac-

celerating Ebola outbreak combined with acute food insecurity in eastern provinces.

Middle East Ceasefire & Humanitarian Demands (July 31)

Global Security | The UN Secretary-General issued an urgent call for an immediate cessation of hostilities as civilian casualties and displacement escalated across Gaza, the West Bank, and southern border zones.

Chatham House Global Order Summit (Late July Follow-ups)

Diplomacy | High-level discussions following the mid-summer London Conference saw European and Global South diplomats framing new bilateral alignment agreements on defense trade and AI governance, signaling a shift toward regional multilateralism.

WMO Global Warning on Intensifying El Niño (July 31)

Climate & Science | The UN World Meteorological Organization released a critical update warning that an intensifying El Niño pattern will trigger record temperature anomalies and altered rainfall cycles across Southern Africa, South Asia, and the Pacific.

WHO Advisory on Wildfire Smoke Exposure (July 31)

Environment & Health | Following severe wildfires across North America and Southern Europe, the World Health Organization published new cross-border air-quality guidelines warning of severe long-range respiratory health impacts from particulate pollution.

East Asia \$900 Billion Maritime Investment Report (July 31)

Economy & Logistics | Regional economic bodies published a joint report outlining a \$900 billion infrastructure shortfall needed to modernize and secure critical maritime supply channels across the East Asia and Pacific trade networks.



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Justice vs. Judicature

July 2026

Editor:

T. Kalamidas

Contributors:

John Reid, Robert Perez,
Thanos Kalamidas,
Gabriele Schmitt,
Markus Gibbons,
Flo Schofield, Jemma
Norman, Sidney Shelton,
Timothy Davies,
Eze Ogbu, John Kato,
Mia Rodríguez,
Mathew Walls,
Valentina Carvajal
Caballero, Jennifer
Stephenson, Melina
Barnett, Mahboob A.
Khawaja, PhD. Mary
Long, Shanna Shepard,
Manish Kumar Arora,
Abigail George, Nikos
Laios, Anya Tiosa



contents

Editorial	3
The world in light focus	6

Justice vs. Judicature

The fallacy of the flawless text by John Reid	13
The autocrat's appointee by Robert Perez	20
The fragility of judicial neutrality in Europe by Thanos Kalamidas	28
The emptying of the house by Gabriele Schmitt	34
The quiet dismantling of American legitimacy by Markus Gibbons	43
The hidden enemy of justice is not always corruption, sometimes it is the human mind by Flo Schofield	50
Britain's post-Brexit judiciary by Jemma Norman	59
Unexpected court cases	64
Compliance vs. Conscience by Sidney Shelton	69
The patronage of the pardon by Timothy Davies	76
When courts become the enemy of the people by Eze Ogbu	83
Ruling by defiance by John Kato	90
The franchise of juridical illiberalism by Mia Rodríguez	97
Why judicial accountability needs a new foundation by Mathew Walls	103
The algorithm in the dock by Thanos Kalamidas	111
Artificial intelligence and justice by Valentina Carvajal Caballero	119
Algorithm in robes by Jennifer Stephenson	124



Thoughts/articles

Ashes for sale by Melina Barnett	131
Futile walls by Thanos Kalamidas	134
The newsroom in someone's spare room by Sidney Shelton	137
Humanity at Crossroads: Where are the Peacemakers? By Mahboob A. Khawaja, PhD.	140
Generals' murderous arithmetic by Mary Long	145
The myth of the inevitable machine menace by Jiro Lambert	141
The footpath that still knows the way The Route of Truce	152
One year of contribution, inspiration and excellence by GAFG	156
Manish Zodiac Predictions for August 2026	161

Poetry / Fiction

ARMAGEDDON by David Sparenberg	167
One night when it was late we went to Zoo Lake by Abigail George	169
Regrets by Nikos Laios	171
The price of rust by Anya Tiosa	172

Art

Art news	178
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August 2026

THE FALLACY OF THE FLAWLESS TEXT

BY JOHN REID

There is a comforting belief that has survived centuries of political disappointment, if only the right people can gather in the right room and write the right words, a nation can secure its future.

This belief animates constitutional conventions, reform commissions and political movements across the world. Faced with institutional decay, corruption or democratic backsliding, reformers often return to the same instinctive solution: rewrite the rules. Strengthen oversight. Clarify authority. Add safeguards. Close loopholes. Produce a better constitutional text.

The impulse is understandable. Laws are tangible. Institutions can be redesigned. Clauses can be amended. A constitution appears to offer permanence in an unstable world.

Yet history repeatedly delivers the same uncomfortable lesson: no constitutional document, how-

ever elegantly written, can save a society whose political actors no longer believe in the principles that animate it.

The flaw lies not in the text itself but in the assumption that text governs behavior. It does not. People govern behavior. And when the people entrusted with enforcing laws abandon restraint, ignore conventions, and exploit every ambiguity in pursuit of power, even the most carefully designed system begins to fracture.

The greatest danger to constitutional government is not imperfect rules. It is the illusion that rules alone are sufficient. For generations, many stable democracies have functioned through a combination of formal law and informal norms. The legal structure provides a framework, but the daily operation of government depends on unwritten understandings: respect for institutional independence, acceptance of electoral outcomes, restraint in the use of power, and recognition that opponents are rivals rather than enemies.

Political scientists sometimes describe these as democratic norms. Citizens often experience them simply as common sense.

A losing candidate concedes defeat.

A prosecutor avoids partisan vendettas.

Legislators negotiate rather than sabotage.

Judges prioritize legal reasoning over political loyalty.

None of these behaviors can be fully compelled by constitutional language. They exist because enough people agree that preserving the system is more important than maximizing short-term advantage.

In other words, successful democracies often rely upon what might be called gentlemen's agreements, not in the literal sense of elite handshakes but as a broader culture of self-restraint.

These agreements are rarely discussed when institutions are functioning well because they are largely invisible. They resemble the foundation of a building, unnoticed until cracks begin to appear.

The problem emerges when political actors discover that norms can be violated without immediate consequences.

Every constitutional system contains gaps. No document can anticipate every scenario. No legal text can predict every future conflict. The framers of constitutions understand this reality. They assume that future leaders will exercise judgment when the text is silent or ambiguous.

That assumption works only as long as good faith remains abundant.

When good faith disappears, ambiguity becomes a weapon.

What was once a constitutional safeguard becomes a loophole.

What was once institutional flexibility becomes institutional vulnerability.

What was once mutual restraint becomes unilateral disarmament.

The challenge is not that bad-faith actors break the law outright. Often they do something more dangerous, they follow the letter of the law while destroying its spirit.

A politician may respect procedural requirements while undermining electoral legitimacy.

A government may comply with constitutional formalities while hollowing out independent institutions.

A legislature may preserve democratic appearances while rendering democratic accountability meaningless.

Observers frequently struggle to identify the moment when constitutional decline begins because the system initially appears intact. Elections continue. Courts remain open. Legislatures still convene.

The architecture survives. The culture that sustained it does not.

This distinction is critical because constitutional texts are frequently credited for successes they did not create and blamed for failures they could not prevent.

Consider how often nations search for institutional models abroad. Reformers examine another country's constitution and conclude that its success must derive from particular clauses, structures, or procedures. They attempt to import those features, expecting similar results.

The outcomes are often disappointing. Identical institutions can produce radically different results in different societies because institutions do not operate independently of human behavior.

A constitution is not a machine. It is a framework within which human beings exercise power. The same legal provisions can sup-



port democratic stability in one nation and authoritarian consolidation in another.

The difference is rarely found in the wording.

The difference is found in the people.

This reality creates a paradox that many constitutional debates avoid confronting.

The more perfect a constitutional design appears, the more tempting it becomes to neglect the civic and ethical foundations required to sustain it.

Citizens begin to assume that institutions will automatically protect them. Political leaders convince themselves that legal mechanisms can substitute for personal responsibility. Governments invest enormous energy in procedural engineering while paying less attention to cultivating democratic culture.

Over time, confidence in the system itself becomes a source of vulnerability. People stop asking whether leaders deserve trust because they assume the institutions will constrain them. They stop defending norms because they believe the law will do the work. They stop maintaining civic habits because they imagine constitutional safeguards are self-executing.

They are not. No court order enforces itself. No constitutional provision interprets itself. No election certifies itself. Every institutional safeguard ultimately depends upon individuals choosing to perform their duties honestly.

This is the uncomfortable truth at the center of every constitutional system, law possesses no independent agency.

A constitution cannot stand up and defend itself.

A statute cannot refuse corruption.

A legal provision cannot resist intimidation.

Only people can do those things.

This does not mean constitutional design is unimportant. Poorly designed institutions create vulnerabilities. Weak checks and balances invite abuse. Concentrated authority increases risk. Structural reform matters.

But structure is a necessary condition, not a sufficient one. The belief that constitutional engineering alone can secure liberty is a form of political determinism. It assumes that institutional design can overcome human incentives indefinitely.

Experience suggests otherwise. The most enduring political systems survive not because they discovered flawless constitutional formulas but because enough citizens, officials, judges, journalists, civil servants and political leaders remain committed to defending the principles behind those formulas.

The survival of democratic government ultimately depends less on the brilliance of its founders than on the character of those who inherit their work.

This may sound disappointingly simple. Modern societies prefer technical solutions. We trust expertise. We admire institutional complexity. We look for mechanisms that can remove human weakness from the equation.

Politics does not permit such escape. Every constitutional order eventually encounters moments when the written rules are insufficient and individuals must decide whether to uphold the spirit of the system or exploit it.

At those moments, the decisive factor is not the document. It is the person reading it. The search for a flawless constitutional text is therefore misguided. No text can eliminate the need for civic virtue, institutional loyalty, or ethical judgment. No collection of clauses can permanently protect a society whose leaders and citizens cease to value constitutional government itself.

The lesson is neither cynical nor pessimistic. It is simply realistic. Free societies are not protected by parchment. They are protected by people. Constitutions matter. Laws matter. Institutions matter. But their strength is always borrowed. They derive their force from the men and women willing to defend them.

When those people disappear, even the finest constitutional architecture becomes fragile. And when they remain, even imperfect systems can endure. The enduring fallacy is the belief that laws protect people. The deeper truth is that people executing laws protect people. Everything else is commentary. ■



AUTOCRAT'S APPOINTEE

BY ROBERT PEREZ

There was once a broadly accepted, if imperfectly observed, principle in democratic governance: judges should arrive at the bench by different roads. Some came from private practice. Others emerged from public defense offices, prosecutor ranks, academia, military service, civil-rights litigation, regulatory agencies, or state courts. They brought with them distinct experiences, competing intellectual traditions, and varied understandings of how law intersects with ordinary life.

This diversity was never merely cosmetic. It was functional. Courts derive legitimacy not only from their constitutional authority but from the public belief that judges are capable of considering disputes from multiple perspectives. A judiciary populated by individuals who have spent their careers in different corners of the legal profession is more likely to appreciate the complexity of the cases before it. Such diversity acts as a safeguard against ideological conformity and institutional blindness.



Yet a troubling trend has emerged in many democracies, particularly those experiencing democratic backsliding. Judicial selection increasingly resembles political recruitment. The decisive qualification is no longer excellence, independence, or breadth of experience. Instead, it is loyalty.

The transformation rarely happens all at once. It begins with subtle changes in rhetoric. Political leaders complain that courts are obstructing the popular will. Judges who issue unfavorable rulings are accused of partisanship, while those who support government positions are praised as defenders of the nation. Over time, judicial nominations become less about identifying the most capable legal minds and more about identifying the most reliable political allies.

The result is a loyalty litmus test masquerading as a merit process. This shift produces consequences that extend far beyond individual appointments. It fundamentally alters the purpose of the judiciary itself.

An independent judge views the law as an external constraint. The law exists before the judge arrives and remains after the judge departs. The judge's task is to interpret and apply it, even when doing so leads to politically inconvenient outcomes.

A loyalist judge approaches the role differently. The law becomes a vehicle for achieving preferred political objectives. Constitutional provisions become flexible when they obstruct allies and rigid when they constrain opponents. Legal reasoning still exists, but increasingly as justification rather than analysis.

The distinction may sound abstract, but its practical implications are profound. Citizens enter courtrooms expecting neutral arbitration. Businesses invest capital believing contracts will be enforced fairly. Political minorities accept electoral defeat because they trust that courts will protect their rights. Journalists publish uncomfortable truths assuming independent judges will resist political pressure.

All these assumptions depend upon a judiciary that stands apart from partisan struggles. Once courts are perceived as extensions of governing coalitions, public confidence begins to erode. Litigants stop seeing judges as referees and start seeing them as political actors. Court decisions are interpreted not through legal reasoning but through partisan alignment. Every ruling becomes another battle in an ongoing political war.

This erosion of trust is particularly dangerous because judicial legitimacy is uniquely fragile. Legislatures possess electoral mandates. Executives command bureaucracies and security forces. Courts possess neither. Their authority depends largely upon public acceptance of their neutrality. A judge cannot personally enforce a ruling. Compliance occurs because citizens and institutions believe the ruling emerged from a legitimate process.

When that belief disappears, courts retain their buildings, titles, and ceremonial robes, but lose much of their moral authority. Supporters of loyalty-based appointments often defend them on democratic grounds. Elections have consequences, they argue. If voters choose a government, that government should have the right to appoint judges who share its constitutional philosophy.

There is some truth in this argument. No judiciary exists entirely outside politics. Judicial appointments have always reflected ideological considerations to some degree. Presidents, prime ministers, and legislatures naturally seek nominees whose legal philosophies align broadly with their own.

But there is a critical difference between appointing judges who share certain interpretive principles and appointing judges whose primary qualification is political reliability. The former seeks intellectual compatibility. The latter seeks obedience.

A healthy democracy can survive ideological disagreement within its courts. Indeed, such disagreement is often a sign of institutional vitality. Judges challenge one another's assumptions, test legal arguments rigorously, and expose weaknesses in prevailing doctrines.

A judiciary selected primarily for loyalty, however, gradually loses this capacity for internal critique. Professional diversity shrinks. Intellectual diversity follows. The range of acceptable viewpoints narrows until conformity becomes an unwritten requirement.

This process is self-reinforcing. As independent-minded candidates are passed over, ambitious lawyers adapt. They learn which affiliations, statements and positions advance judicial careers. Public displays of loyalty become professional assets. Skepticism becomes risky. Silence becomes safer than dissent.



Eventually, entire generations of legal professionals internalize the lesson that advancement depends less on excellence than on political alignment. The damage extends beyond the judiciary itself. Law schools, professional associations, and legal institutions begin adjusting to the new reality. Aspiring judges cultivate partisan networks instead of professional reputations. Public service becomes secondary to political signaling.

The legal profession slowly transforms from a guardian of institutional independence into a pipeline for ideological personnel. History offers numerous examples of this phenomenon. Authoritarian systems rarely abolish courts outright. Doing so would be too obvious and politically costly. Instead, they preserve judicial structures while altering judicial incentives.

The courthouse remains. The constitutional language remains. The procedural rituals remain. What changes is the understanding of the judge's role.

Rather than serving as a check on power, courts become instruments through which power is exercised. Legal outcomes remain

predictable, but only because everyone knows which interests the judiciary is expected to protect.

The appearance of legality survives while the substance of independence fades. Modern autocrats understand that judicial capture is often more effective than judicial destruction. Citizens are more likely to accept controversial actions when they carry judicial approval. International observers are less alarmed when legal procedures appear intact. Political opponents face greater obstacles when adverse decisions arrive wrapped in the language of constitutional interpretation.

The judiciary becomes not a restraint upon government power but a mechanism for legitimizing it. Professional diversity serves as a crucial defense against this outcome. A former public defender may see consequences that a corporate attorney overlooks. A judge with experience in regulatory enforcement may evaluate administrative disputes differently than a career academic. A lawyer who has represented vulnerable communities may identify concerns invisible to those who have spent careers serving powerful institutions.

These differences enrich judicial deliberation. They reduce the risk of groupthink. They encourage humility. Most importantly, they remind courts that the law governs a society composed of many interests, experiences, and perspectives.

When loyalty becomes the primary criterion for advancement, these benefits disappear. The judiciary grows more homogeneous not necessarily in demographics, but in outlook. The institution becomes less curious, less independent, and less capable of challenging prevailing assumptions.

Such courts may still produce technically sophisticated opin-

ions. They may still cite precedents and constitutional provisions with impressive rigor. But sophistication should not be confused with independence. The most dangerous captured judiciary is often not the crudest one. It is the one capable of providing elegant legal justifications for predetermined outcomes.

Defenders of democratic institutions should therefore pay closer attention not only to who becomes a judge but how judges are chosen. Questions about professional background, intellectual independence, and demonstrated commitment to public service are not secondary considerations. They are central safeguards.

A judiciary composed entirely of ideological allies may offer short-term political victories for whichever faction controls appointments. Yet those victories carry long-term costs. Future governments inherit the same politicized structures. Public trust declines. Legal legitimacy weakens. Constitutional guarantees become contingent upon political fortunes.

The immediate beneficiaries may celebrate. The eventual losers are everyone else. The judiciary's highest purpose is not to advance a party, a movement, or a leader. Its purpose is to ensure that law remains larger than any of them.

When judges begin viewing their robes as team uniforms, the court ceases to be an arbiter. It becomes an enforcement mechanism. And once that transformation is complete, restoring judicial independence is far more difficult than preserving it in the first place. ■



Daddy,

loves Mummy.

He kicks her, punches her,

shouts nasty words

and makes her cry.

And Daddy

loves me.

He burns me, slaps me,

locks me in

a cupboard

and calls me

a failure.

I hate love.

STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE NOW! 

THE FRAGILITY OF JUDICIAL NEUTRALITY IN EUROPE

BY THANOS KALAMIDAS

Europe likes to imagine itself as a continent governed by rules rather than passions. Its institutions are built on the promise that laws will prevail over whims that rights will be protected regardless of popularity, and that courts will stand above the ideological battles that consume elected governments. The European Union, with its treaties, directives, charters and oversight mechanisms, has long presented itself as a guardian of these principles. Yet beneath this reassuring architecture lies a less comfortable reality: laws, however elegantly written, are ultimately interpreted and enforced by human beings. And human beings carry prejudices, loyalties, fears, and political convictions into every institution they inhabit.

The assumption that judges exist outside society has always been something of a fiction. Judges do not emerge from laboratories where neutrality is distilled

and bottled. They are shaped by families, communities, educational systems, political climates, and personal experiences. They read newspapers, watch television, participate in public debates, and absorb the cultural anxieties of their era. The robe may symbolize impartiality but it cannot erase a lifetime of beliefs.

This becomes particularly troubling when courts are asked to decide cases involving minorities, immigrants, political dissidents, or marginalized groups. In such cases, legal reasoning and personal worldview can become difficult to separate. A judge who harbors unexamined xenophobic assumptions may sincerely believe they are merely applying the law. A judge influenced by nationalist sentiment may frame their decisions as protecting constitutional traditions rather than privileging one identity over another. A judge uncomfortable with LGBTQ rights may insist that their reasoning rests on legal principles while arriving repeatedly at conclusions that restrict the freedoms of sexual minorities.

The danger is rarely dramatic. Popular imagination tends to picture judicial corruption as a crude exchange of favors, envelopes stuffed with cash, or overt political instructions from gov-





ernment officials. Such abuses certainly exist, but they are often easier to identify and condemn. More difficult to confront are the subtle distortions created by bias. These distortions rarely announce themselves openly. Instead, they emerge through patterns of interpretation, selective emphasis, and discretionary decisions that appear reasonable when viewed individually but reveal a troubling consistency when examined collectively.

Europe's legal systems are often praised for their safeguards. Appeals courts review lower court decisions. Constitutional courts oversee legislation. European institutions monitor compliance with fundamental rights standards. International tribunals provide additional avenues for redress. These mechanisms undoubtedly matter. They have corrected injustices, restrained governments, and protected vulnerable populations. Yet safeguards

are not magical shields. They depend on the same fragile resource as every other democratic institution: the willingness of individuals to uphold principles even when doing so conflicts with their personal preferences.

The rise of political polarization across Europe has intensified these concerns. In many countries, debates over immigration, national identity, religion, and cultural change have become increasingly heated. Political movements once confined to the margins have entered mainstream discourse. Ideas that were previously regarded as unacceptable now receive regular media exposure and electoral support. Courts do not operate in isolation from these developments. Judges are members of the societies experiencing these tensions, and the judiciary inevitably feels the pressure generated by broader political conflicts.

This does not mean that every controversial judgment reflects prejudice. Courts must often resolve difficult questions for which reasonable people can disagree. Judicial independence requires allowing judges to reach conclusions that may be unpopular. The problem arises when ideological commitments begin to masquerade as neutral legal interpretation. At that point, the legitimacy of the institution itself comes into question.

Public trust in the judiciary rests on a delicate bargain. Citizens agree to accept decisions they dislike because they believe those decisions were reached through a fair process. They may lose a case, disagree with the outcome, or object to the reasoning, yet still maintain confidence in the system if they believe the judge acted impartially. Once that confidence erodes, however, the authority of courts becomes increasingly dependent on force rather than legitimacy.

The consequences extend beyond individual cases. Every decision perceived as biased sends a signal about who truly belongs within the political community. When immigrants repeatedly encounter hostile rulings, they may conclude that equal protection exists more in theory than in practice. When sexual minorities see their rights treated as negotiable while others' rights are considered fundamental, they may question whether the legal system regards them as full citizens. When ethnic or religious minorities experience disproportionate skepticism in court, the promise of equality before the law begins to sound hollow.

The European Union often presents itself as a corrective mechanism for such failures. It has developed legal frameworks intended to promote judicial independence and protect fundamental rights. Yet its influence has limits. The Union can issue warnings, initiate proceedings, and exert political pressure, but it cannot transform human nature. No treaty provision can entirely eliminate prejudice. No oversight body can monitor every courtroom. No institutional design can guarantee perfect neutrality.

This reality should not lead to cynicism. The existence of bias does not mean justice is impossible. Rather, it highlights the importance of humility. Democracies function best when they acknowledge the imperfections of their institutions instead of pretending those imperfections do not exist. Courts deserve respect, but not reverence. Judicial decisions deserve scrutiny, particularly when they affect vulnerable populations. The belief that judges are fallible is not an attack on the rule of law; it is an essential component of preserving it.

The challenge facing Europe is therefore not merely legal but cultural. It requires fostering a judicial environment in which self-examination is valued, diversity of experience is represent-

ed, and institutional accountability is taken seriously. It requires recognizing that prejudice can exist even among highly educated professionals who sincerely view themselves as impartial. Most importantly, it requires abandoning the comforting illusion that legal systems automatically produce justice simply because they are surrounded by sophisticated procedures and elegant constitutional language.

The rule of law is often described as one of Europe's greatest achievements. That description is justified. Yet the rule of law is not a monument carved in stone. It is a living practice sustained by imperfect individuals making difficult decisions under imperfect conditions. Its survival depends not on the assumption that judges are free from political influence or personal prejudice, but on a continuous effort to identify, challenge, and limit those influences whenever they appear.

Europe's courts remain among the strongest institutions on the continent. But strength should never be confused with invulnerability. The greatest threat to judicial integrity is not always the politician openly attacking the courts. Sometimes it is the quieter, more elusive danger of bias concealed beneath the language of neutrality. And because that danger wears the appearance of legitimacy, it is often the hardest one to confront. ■



THE EMPTYING OF THE HOUSE

BY GABRIELE SCHMITT

There is a particular kind of crisis that rarely announces itself. It does not arrive with tanks in the streets or crowds gathered outside parliament buildings. It does not break into headlines with the dramatic force of constitutional amendments or emergency decrees. Instead, it unfolds quietly, behind office doors, in resignation letters drafted late at night and retirement forms submitted months earlier than planned.

The crisis begins when experienced prosecutors decide they can no longer remain. Across democratic societies, ministries of justice and civil-rights divisions have long depended upon a peculiar class of public servants. They are rarely famous. Their names seldom appear in newspapers. Most spend decades moving through the same institutional hallways, serving governments led by parties they support and parties they do not. They learn procedures that are not written down, absorb norms that cannot easily be codified, and develop instincts about where the boundaries of power ought to lie.

Their work is not glamorous. In many cases, it is deliberately invisible. The public tends to imagine justice systems as collections of laws. But laws, by themselves, are inert. What gives them meaning are the people entrusted with interpreting and enforcing them. Every mature legal institution operates not merely through statutes but through traditions, habits, and ethical understandings accumulated over generations.

These understandings are fragile. In recent years, a growing number of justice ministries and prosecutorial offices around the world have experienced a troubling pattern: the departure of veteran career officials who refuse to participate in investigations they regard as politically motivated. Some leave voluntarily. Others are reassigned, marginalized, pressured into retirement, or publicly discredited. Their replacements are often selected less for professional independence than for ideological reliability.

The immediate political incentives behind such changes are easy enough to understand. Governments naturally wish to ad-



vance their agendas. Political leaders frequently become frustrated with institutional resistance. Career prosecutors can appear slow, cautious, and stubborn. They ask inconvenient questions. They demand evidence. They decline to pursue cases that seem legally weak even when they might be politically useful.

To reformers, these officials can appear obstructive. To authoritarians, they appear intolerable. The distinction between those two perspectives is often revealed by what happens next.

In healthy systems, political leaders may criticize prosecutors, argue with them, or seek legislative changes. Yet they ultimately accept that certain decisions must remain insulated from partisan considerations. The prosecutor's role is not to help a government win political battles but to determine whether facts and law justify action.

When that principle weakens, a different logic emerges. The question ceases to be whether an investigation is justified. The question becomes whether it is useful.

At first, the transformation can seem modest. A few personnel changes. A few unusual promotions. A handful of resignations. Supporters of the governing party often dismiss concerns as exaggerated. After all, every administration appoints people it trusts. Every government seeks officials aligned with its priorities.

But institutions do not simply consist of organizational charts. They consist of memory. A veteran prosecutor who has spent thirty years evaluating corruption cases possesses something far more valuable than technical expertise. That person remembers why certain safeguards exist. They remember past abuses. They remember scandals that led to reforms and reforms that emerged



from scandals. They carry institutional antibodies developed through experience.

Their departure removes more than a single employee. It removes accumulated judgment. Consider what happens inside any large organization when experienced personnel disappear. Procedures remain. Manuals remain. Formal authority remains. Yet something essential vanishes.

The younger employees no longer have mentors who can tell them why a rule matters. Historical context becomes fragmented. Informal restraints weaken. Practices once understood as inappropriate gradually become normalized because nobody remains who remembers when they were considered unacceptable.

The result is not usually immediate corruption. It is often something more subtle and perhaps more dangerous: ethical drift. Ethical drift occurs when institutions slowly lose their sense of where the line is.

A prosecutor who joins an office already shaped by political loyalty may never experience the professional culture that existed before. They may sincerely believe that pursuing opponents while protecting allies is simply how the system functions. Without institutional memory, there is no benchmark against which to measure decline.

The erosion becomes self-reinforcing. As more independent officials leave, the environment becomes increasingly hostile to those who remain. Dissent appears unusual. Conformity becomes rewarded. Ambitious younger lawyers learn which positions lead to advancement and which lead to isolation.

Over time, the culture changes. What once would have provoked outrage begins to seem ordinary. The public often notices this transformation only when its consequences become impossible to ignore.



Suddenly, investigations appear strangely selective. Political opponents attract extraordinary scrutiny while allies receive remarkable leniency. Civil-rights enforcement becomes inconsistent. Decisions that once seemed grounded in legal reasoning begin to resemble strategic communications exercises. Observers search for dramatic explanations. Yet the explanation may be painfully simple.

The people who would have said no are gone. Democratic societies frequently underestimate the importance of those refusals. Popular imagination celebrates leaders, activists, judges, and legislators. Far less attention is paid to the anonymous career official who quietly declines to approve an unjustified warrant or refuses to pursue a legally dubious prosecution. Such actions rarely become public. They leave little historical record.

Yet they are often among the most important acts performed within a constitutional system. The rule of law depends not merely upon legal powers but upon individuals willing to exercise restraint. Restraint, however, is difficult to institutionalize.

Governments can mandate action. They can measure productivity. They can reward loyalty. But restraint relies upon professional norms and ethical cultures that take decades to develop and only a few years to destroy.

This asymmetry creates a profound vulnerability. Building an independent justice system requires generations. Undermining one requires only a determined political movement and a sufficient number of vacancies.

What makes the current moment particularly concerning is that many societies appear to be confronting this challenge si-

multaneously. Political polarization has intensified. Public trust in institutions has declined. Leaders increasingly frame opponents not as rivals but as existential threats.

Under such conditions, the temptation to weaponize legal institutions grows stronger. Once politics becomes a struggle between absolute good and absolute evil, procedural safeguards begin to look less like protections and more like obstacles. If one's opponents are portrayed as uniquely dangerous, extraordinary measures start to seem justified.

History suggests that this logic rarely remains confined to one faction. Powers created to target today's enemies become available to tomorrow's governments. Institutions weakened for immediate advantage often prove incapable of protecting anyone when political fortunes change.

This is why the departure of career prosecutors matters so profoundly. The issue is not whether every veteran official is correct. Experienced civil servants can be mistaken. They can become complacent. Some reforms are genuinely necessary.

The danger emerges when independence itself becomes suspect. A justice system cannot function as an extension of partisan strategy. The moment prosecutors understand that their careers depend upon producing politically desirable outcomes, the institution's fundamental purpose begins to change.

The public may not notice immediately. Courtrooms will still operate. Press conferences will still occur. Official statements will still invoke the language of law and justice. But beneath the surface, the architecture begins to shift.

The house remains standing even as its foundation is removed. Eventually, however, societies discover that institutions are easier to hollow out than to rebuild. Professional cultures disappear faster than they can be recreated. Expertise retires. Memory fades. Ethical traditions fracture.

And when a future crisis arrives when genuine independence is needed most the people capable of providing it may no longer be there. That is the quiet crisis unfolding in ministries of justice and civil-rights divisions around the world. It is not primarily a story about ideology, elections, or individual leaders. It is a story about absence.

About offices where experienced voices no longer speak. About decisions no longer challenged. About boundaries no longer defended. Most of all, it is about the realization that the health of democratic institutions depends not only on the laws written in constitutions but on the countless individuals willing to uphold unwritten principles when doing so carries personal cost.

When those individuals leave, they take more than their experience with them. They take a portion of the institution's conscience. And consciences, once lost, are notoriously difficult to replace. ■





August 2026

THE QUIET DISMANTLING OF AMERICAN LEGITIMACY

BY MARKUS GIBBONS

There is a peculiar danger in the decline of a democracy: the collapse rarely announces itself with a trumpet blast. Institutions do not generally fall in a single dramatic moment. More often, they lose credibility gradually, almost imperceptibly, until one day citizens realize that they no longer trust the referee, the judge, or the rules themselves.

The United States has long presented itself as a nation governed not by men but by institutions. Presidents came and went. Parties rose and fell. Social movements succeeded or failed. Yet the underlying promise remained the same: that the courts would stand apart from politics, that the Constitution would protect minorities from the passions of the majority, and that justice would be administered according to law rather than political loyalty.

That promise appears increasingly fragile. The return of Donald Trump to the center of Ameri-



can political life has intensified a debate that reaches far beyond any one individual. For critics, the concern is not merely Trump's conduct but what his political movement has revealed about the vulnerability of institutions once assumed to be permanent. The fear is that the machinery of government is being transformed from an impartial system into an instrument of political power, one that rewards allies and punishes opponents.

Historically, Americans have been taught to distinguish between political conflict and legal judgment. Elections settle political disputes; courts resolve legal ones. The distinction is essential. Once citizens begin to believe that prosecutors are merely politicians with law degrees or that judges are simply partisans in robes, the legitimacy of the entire system begins to erode.

Many observers argue that the weaponization of the justice system is not merely a matter of who gets investigated or prosecuted. It is a broader phenomenon in which legal institutions become perceived as extensions of political warfare. The danger lies partly

in reality and partly in perception. Even if the law remains formally independent, the public's confidence in that independence can be shattered.

Trust, after all, is the invisible currency of democratic governance. A court possesses no army. A judge commands no police force of his own. Institutions function because citizens collectively agree that their decisions deserve obedience. Once that belief disappears, authority becomes increasingly difficult to sustain.

No institution illustrates this dilemma more vividly than the Supreme Court. For generations, the Court occupied a nearly sacred place in American civic mythology. Citizens disagreed with its rulings, sometimes fiercely, but the institution itself retained a degree of prestige. Even controversial decisions were often accepted because they emerged from a body perceived as standing above ordinary politics.

That perception has weakened dramatically. Recent years have seen the Court become the subject of increasingly partisan interpretations. Conservatives celebrate decisions that they regard as constitutional corrections. Liberals often see the same rulings as evidence of ideological activism. The result is not merely disagreement over outcomes but disagreement over the Court's legitimacy itself.

This represents a profound shift. Americans once argued about what the Constitution required. Increasingly, they argue about whether the Court is capable of interpreting the Constitution fairly at all.

The consequences extend beyond legal theory. Every controversial ruling now arrives in an atmosphere of suspicion. Sup-

porters praise principle; critics see politics. The authority of the institution is consumed by the polarization surrounding it.

A Supreme Court that loses public confidence may still issue decisions, but it cannot easily command respect. The controversy surrounding minority protections reveals another dimension of this transformation.

The modern American state emerged from the recognition that formal equality alone was insufficient to remedy historical discrimination. Throughout the twentieth century, policymakers constructed legal frameworks designed to expand opportunities for groups that had long faced exclusion. These measures were imperfect, frequently contested, and sometimes contradictory. Yet they reflected a widely accepted principle, that democracy requires not only majority rule but also safeguards for vulnerable minorities.

Today that principle faces renewed challenge. Critics of affirmative action, diversity initiatives, and other minority-focused policies argue that such measures have themselves become discriminatory. They insist that equality requires government neutrality and that race-conscious policies violate the very principles they claim to advance.

Supporters respond that neutrality can become a convenient fiction. A society shaped by generations of unequal treatment does not become fair simply because lawmakers declare it so. Removing protections may create the appearance of equality while preserving entrenched advantages.

The dispute is not merely about policy. It reflects competing visions of justice itself. One vision imagines fairness as the absence



of distinctions. The other views fairness as the correction of inherited inequalities. Neither position can easily dismiss the other, because both appeal to deeply rooted American ideals.

Yet the practical effect of rolling back minority protections is clear: communities that once relied upon institutional safeguards often feel newly exposed. Whether those fears are justified in every case is less important than the fact that they are widely felt. Democratic stability depends not only upon actual protection but also upon confidence that protection exists.

When minorities begin to believe that institutions no longer defend their rights, trust deteriorates. When majorities begin to view every institutional safeguard as illegitimate favoritism, trust deteriorates as well.

The result is a society trapped in mutual suspicion. This may be the defining political story of contemporary America. Not sim-



ply polarization, which has existed before, but the gradual loss of confidence in the institutions that once mediated polarization.

The courts are questioned. Congress is distrusted. The media is dismissed by large portions of the public. Universities face accusations of ideological bias. Elections themselves become subjects of conspiracy and doubt.

Every institution appears weaker than it once did. Some observers view this process as a correction, arguing that Americans are merely shedding naïve assumptions about supposedly neutral institutions that were never truly neutral to begin with. Others see something far more alarming: the slow degradation of the structures that make democratic governance possible.

The distinction matters because democracies do not survive on procedures alone. They survive on legitimacy. A constitution is only paper. A court ruling is only text. A law is merely ink. Their power comes from a shared belief that the system deserves obedience even when it produces outcomes we dislike.

That belief cannot be taken for granted. If the justice system becomes viewed as a weapon, if the Supreme Court becomes viewed as another political actor, and if protections for minorities come to be seen as expendable rather than essential, America risks entering a new political era, one defined not by confidence in institutions but by perpetual conflict over their legitimacy.

The gravest threat to a democracy is not that citizens lose an election. It is that they lose faith in the referee. Once that happens, every judgment appears partisan, every defeat appears stolen, and every institution becomes merely another battlefield. The republic may continue to function on paper, but its moral authority slowly drains away. And history suggests that restoring trust is far more difficult than destroying it. ■



THE HIDDEN ENEMY OF JUSTICE IS NOT ALWAYS CORRUPTION, SOMETIMES IT IS THE HUMAN MIND

BY FLO SCHOFIELD

When people imagine the failures of justice, they usually picture the obvious villains, the corrupt judge taking a bribe, the prosecutor hiding evidence, the politician interfering with the courts. These failures exist, and they deserve scrutiny. But there is another threat to justice that is quieter, more complicated and far harder to confront.

It is the ordinary human mind. The legal system is built on a powerful assumption: that trained professionals, guided by rules and evidence, can rise



above personal instincts and deliver objective decisions. Judges are expected to be impartial. Jurors are instructed to set aside emotions and focus only on facts. Lawyers are expected to present evidence that allows truth to emerge through a fair process.

But beneath the robes, instructions and procedures are human beings. And human beings are not perfectly rational machines. They are influenced by assumptions formed in seconds, information presented first, emotional reactions they barely notice and mental fatigue that slowly erodes judgment. A courtroom may appear to be a place where facts compete and truth prevails, but it is also a place where psychology quietly shapes outcomes. The uncomfortable reality is that justice can be altered not only by bad intentions but by normal human behavior.

The traditional image of the justice system resembles a carefully engineered machine. Evidence enters. Arguments are presented. Rules are applied. A decision emerges.

In this idealized model, personal characteristics disappear. A judge does not see race, wealth, social status or background. A jury does not react to appearances or first impressions. A sentence reflects only the seriousness of the crime and the law that governs it.

But the real process looks different.

The Ideal Legal Process

Evidence → Analysis → Legal Standards → Fair Decision

The assumption is that every stage is controlled by reason.

The Psychological Reality

Evidence → First Impression → Emotional Reaction → Mental Shortcuts → Selective Interpretation → Decision

The difference between these two models is where many hidden problems begin.

The justice system does not operate in a vacuum. It operates inside human minds.

One of the most revealing examples is the anchoring effect.

The human brain has a tendency to rely heavily on the first piece of information it receives when making a decision. Once an initial reference point is established, later judgments often move around that starting point rather than being independently evaluated.

In courtrooms, this can have enormous consequences. A prosecutor recommends a sentence. The number is placed into the



conversation. Even if a judge later considers additional information, that original figure can become a psychological anchor.

A sentence recommendation of 20 years creates a different mental landscape than one of five years. The judge may believe the final decision is entirely independent, but the initial number has already influenced the boundaries of thought.

This does not mean judges are careless or unethical. It means they are human. A person can sincerely believe they are making a neutral decision while being influenced by information that entered the process before they consciously began evaluating it. The danger is not corruption. The danger is invisibility.

Another powerful force is confirmation bias. Once the human brain forms an early conclusion, it naturally searches for information that supports that belief while giving less attention to information that challenges it.

In a courtroom, this can begin with something as simple as an initial impression. A defendant appears nervous. A judge interprets that nervousness as guilt. A defendant comes from a difficult background. A juror unconsciously associates that background with risk. A defendant appears confident. A juror interprets confidence as dishonesty.

The problem is not that people intentionally make unfair judgments. The problem is that the brain is constantly trying to organize information quickly. It uses patterns and shortcuts because, in everyday life, those shortcuts are often useful.

But a courtroom is not everyday life. A legal decision can determine whether someone loses years of freedom, their reputation, their family relationships and their future. A system that depends on human judgment must recognize human limitations.

Perhaps the most uncomfortable idea is that even judges, people selected for intelligence, experience and discipline, are affected by ordinary human conditions.

Fatigue matters. Stress matters. Time matters.

A decision made early in the morning may not be psychologically identical to a decision made after hours of hearings, paperwork and difficult testimony.

A judge handling complex cases all day is not the same cognitive person at 4:30 p.m. that they were at 9 a.m. The law assumes consistency. Human psychology produces variation.

This does not mean judges are incapable of fairness. It means fairness requires systems that account for human reality.

We do not design airplanes assuming pilots will never become tired. We do not design hospitals assuming doctors never experience stress. We create safeguards because even highly trained professionals are still human. The justice system deserves the same humility.

If the problem is human psychology, the solution is not simply telling people to “try harder” to be unbiased. Awareness helps, but awareness alone is not enough. A person cannot eliminate every unconscious influence through willpower. The better approach is to redesign the system around human behavior. One reform would be expanding the use of blind evidence reviews.

Before preliminary decisions are made, certain identifying details could be removed when they are not legally relevant. Information about ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic background or other personal characteristics could be separated from the initial evaluation of evidence. The goal is not to hide facts forever.



The goal is to prevent irrelevant information from shaping early impressions before the legal analysis has properly begun. A second reform would be institutionalizing cognitive breaks. Courts often recognize the importance of procedure, deadlines and evidence handling. They should also recognize the importance of mental capacity.

Mandatory breaks during lengthy hearings are not a luxury. They are a safeguard against predictable human decline in attention and judgment. A tired decision-maker is not necessarily an unfair decision-maker. But a tired decision-maker is a decision-maker operating under different psychological conditions.

The greatest threat to justice may not always come from people who want to destroy it. Sometimes it comes from the assumption that good people automatically produce perfect outcomes. The justice system is filled with professionals who believe deeply in fairness. The problem is not a lack of commitment. The problem is that commitment exists inside a human brain, a brain shaped by instinct, emotion and cognitive shortcuts.

A truly modern justice system must move beyond the idea that fairness comes only from good intentions. Fairness comes from good design. The courts should not ask judges and jurors to become something humans have never been, perfectly objective machines. Instead, the system should acknowledge reality. Humans make decisions. Humans create justice.

And because humans are imperfect, justice itself must be designed with those imperfections in mind. The path toward a fairer legal system is not pretending the human mind does not influence judgment. It is building a system wise enough to expect that it does. ■



Sometimes I find
a place to sleep

But I never dream



BRITAIN'S POST-BREXIT JUDICIARY

BY JEMMA NORMAN

When Britain voted to leave the European Union in 2016, the political slogan was deceptively simple: “Take Back Control.” It promised a restoration of democratic sovereignty, a return of decision-making power to elected representatives, and a renewed confidence in British institutions. Nearly a decade later, however, one of the less discussed consequences of Brexit has been the immense strain placed upon the British judiciary. Courts that once operated within a relatively stable constitutional framework now find themselves navigating a political landscape increasingly shaped by populist rhetoric, constitutional ambiguity, and public distrust.

The result is not necessarily a judiciary that has failed in its legal duties. Rather, it is a judiciary that has become a convenient target for politicians eager to transform complex constitutional disputes into battles between “the people” and allegedly obstructive institutions.

Brexit did not create these tensions, but it accelerated them dramatically. For generations, Britain's constitutional system depended less on written rules than on shared understandings. Parliament was sovereign. Courts interpreted laws. Governments respected conventions. Political disagreements were resolved through a combination of restraint and institutional respect. This arrangement functioned because major political actors accepted unwritten limits on their power.



Brexit disrupted that equilibrium. The referendum itself produced a binary political mandate from an extraordinarily complex question. Once the vote was cast, politicians faced the difficult task of translating a broad democratic instruction into specific legal and constitutional outcomes. Unsurprisingly, disagreements emerged. What kind of Brexit should Britain pursue? How should Parliament be involved? What powers should the executive possess?

These were legitimate constitutional questions. Yet many populist politicians chose not to engage with them as such. Instead,

judges increasingly became symbols in a larger political narrative. When courts ruled on Brexit-related matters, they were often portrayed not as neutral interpreters of the law but as obstacles to the popular will. The infamous attacks on judges following major constitutional rulings marked a turning point in British political culture. Decisions that would once have been debated on legal grounds became ammunition in a broader campaign against institutional checks and balances.



This was a profound mistake. A functioning democracy requires courts to resolve disputes about governmental power. Indeed, this is precisely when judicial independence matters most. Courts are not intended to determine political outcomes; they are intended to ensure that political actors operate within the law. When judges are attacked for performing this role, the public receives a dangerous message: that legal constraints are somehow illegitimate if they interfere with political objectives.

Populist movements thrive on such narratives. Their central claim is often that a unified “people” are being frustrated by elites, bureaucrats, experts, or institutions. Courts fit neatly into this framework because judicial reasoning is often technical, cautious, and resistant to simplistic slogans. Legal analysis rarely provides the dramatic clarity that populist politics demands.

The consequence is an erosion of trust. When political leaders repeatedly suggest that judges are enemies of democratic choice, public confidence in judicial impartiality inevitably suffers. Citizens begin to view court decisions through partisan lenses. Legal outcomes become interpreted as political victories or defeats rather than applications of constitutional principle. Over time, this weakens one of the most important foundations of liberal democracy: belief in the neutrality of the legal system.

Brexit has also exposed structural weaknesses within Britain's constitutional arrangements. Unlike many democracies, the United Kingdom lacks a single codified constitution. Its constitutional order depends on statutes, conventions, judicial decisions, and historical practices. This flexibility has often been celebrated as a strength. Yet flexibility becomes vulnerability when political actors are willing to test institutional boundaries.

The years following Brexit witnessed repeated clashes between Parliament, the executive, and the courts. These confrontations revealed uncertainty about where authority ultimately resides in moments of constitutional stress. Judges found themselves being asked to resolve disputes that previously would have been settled through political negotiation and mutual restraint.

This placed the judiciary in an unenviable position. If courts intervened, they were accused of judicial activism. If they de-

clined to intervene, they risked being seen as abandoning their constitutional responsibilities. Either way, they became participants in controversies that threatened their perceived neutrality.

The broader problem is that populist politics tends to view institutions instrumentally. Institutions are praised when they deliver desired outcomes and condemned when they do not. Such an approach undermines the very purpose of constitutional governance. The value of an independent judiciary lies not in producing preferred results but in applying legal principles consistently, regardless of political consequences.

Britain is hardly alone in facing this challenge. Across Western democracies, populist leaders have increasingly questioned the legitimacy of courts, electoral commissions, civil services, and independent regulators. The pattern is familiar. Institutions that constrain executive power become portrayed as barriers to democracy rather than safeguards of it.

Yet genuine democracy is not simply majority rule. It is majority rule operating within a framework of law. Elections provide governments with authority, but institutions provide limits. Without those limits, democratic systems risk sliding toward majoritarianism, where temporary political victories justify the concentration of power.

The post-Brexit experience offers a cautionary lesson. The greatest threat to judicial legitimacy does not come from judges themselves. It comes from political leaders who seek short-term electoral gains by encouraging public suspicion toward constitutional institutions. Every time courts are cast as adversaries rather than arbiters, public trust weakens. Every time constitutional disputes are reduced to populist slogans, democratic culture becomes more fragile.



The irony is striking. Brexit was presented as a project of national self-government and democratic renewal. Yet one of its enduring legacies may be a diminished respect for the institutions that make democratic government sustainable.

Britain's judiciary remains independent. Its judges continue to perform their duties with professionalism and restraint. The real question is whether the political class is willing to demonstrate the same commitment to constitutional responsibility.

Democracies do not collapse when courts issue unpopular decisions. They begin to erode when politicians convince citizens that independent courts are the problem. That is a lesson Britain would be wise to remember long after the arguments over Brexit have faded. ■



UNEXPECTED COURT CASES

Jet Dreams

In 1999, an American student named John Leonard noticed a Pepsi commercial advertising a Harrier jump jet for 7,000,000 Pepsi Points. Realizing he could buy points directly for 10 cents each, he raised \$700,000 and demanded the \$23 million military aircraft. Pepsi refused, leading to a lawsuit where the judge ruled that no reasonable person could conclude a fast-food style commercial was a literal offer to deliver a military warplane.

Pants Panic

When a Washington, D.C. dry cleaner lost a pair of suit trousers in 2005, owner Roy Pearson, who happened to be an administrative law judge, sued the shop for \$67 million. He claimed the store's "Satisfaction Guaranteed" window sign constituted fraudulent advertising. He lost the case and subsequently lost his judicial appointment.

Potato Paranoia

In the UK, Procter & Gamble went to court to argue that Pringles were not potato chips (crisps).

Because potato products were subject to Value Added Tax (VAT) but general savory snacks were exempt, the company argued Pringles were only 42% potato dough and thus more like a cake or biscuit. They won initially, but higher courts later ruled that Pringles contained enough potato to be taxed like chips.

Rain Regrets

An Israeli woman sued a local TV station and its meteorologist after a forecast predicted clear skies and sunshine. Tricked by the weather report, she dressed lightly, got caught in an unexpected rainstorm, caught the flu, missed work, and spent money on medication. The court ruled in her favor, awarding her a settlement for the bad prediction.

Duck Drugs

During a drug conspiracy hearing in the UK, a duck farmer charged with marijuana possession presented a unique legal defense: “ducking necessity”. He told the court he was growing the cannabis strictly to feed it to his flock, claiming it was the only natural way to deworm his ducks.

Noodle Meltdown

A Florida woman filed a \$5 million class-action lawsuit against Kraft Heinz, alleging that Velveeta Shells & Cheese microwave cups were deceptively labeled. The package claimed the meal was “ready in 3½ minutes,” but she argued this was false advertising because the 3.5 minutes only covered the microwaving time, ignoring the time required to remove the lid, add water, and stir in the cheese. A federal judge dismissed the suit.

False Froth

In 1991, a man sued beer manufacturer Anheuser-Busch for \$10,000 for false advertising. He claimed the company's commercials showed beautiful men and women instantly appearing on tropical beaches whenever someone popped open a Bud Light. He argued that despite drinking the beer, no such paradise or attractive companions materialised, causing him emotional distress. The case was promptly thrown out.

Doppelgänger Distress

An Oregon man sued basketball legend Michael Jordan and Nike co-founder Phil Knight for \$832 million in 2006. His complaint? He looked so much like Michael Jordan that strangers constantly mistook him for the star, causing him severe emotional suffering. The fact that he was eight years older, six inches shorter, and wore a matching earring didn't help his case, which he eventually dropped.

Dognapper Demands

After pop star Lady Gaga offered a \$500,000 reward with “no questions asked” for the safe return of her stolen French bulldogs, the dogs were returned by a woman who claimed to have found them. When police discovered the woman was actually an accessory connected to the violent dognapping crew, she was arrested and then sued Lady Gaga for failing to pay her the \$500,000 reward. The judge dismissed the lawsuit.

Feline Felonies

In the classic English legal case *Buckle v. Holmes* (1926), a pigeon owner sued his neighbor after the neighbor's cat wandered into

his garden and ate several valuable homing pigeons. The Court of Appeal held that cat owners cannot be held legally liable for property damage caused by a roaming cat, ruling that hunting birds is simply basic cat nature.

Sparkle Shackles

An exotic dancer placed under court-ordered house arrest with a mandatory ankle monitor returned to court to ask the judge for an exception. She argued the bulky black device was “ruining her vibe” and cost outfit points at work. The judge denied the request to remove the monitor, offering instead a creative solution: “Bedazzle that thing to match your outfits”.

Name Nightmare

In New Zealand, a family court judge made a 9-year-old girl a ward of the state for the explicit purpose of overriding her parents’ legal naming choice. Her parents had legally named her “Tallulah Does The Hula From Hawaii,” causing the child so much embarrassment that she refused to tell her friends her real name. The court formally changed her name to protect her mental well-being.





COMPLIANCE VS. CONSCIENCE

BY SIDNEY SHELTON

For most Americans, the federal judiciary exists primarily in the imagination as nine justices seated beneath marble columns in Washington. Constitutional drama, we are taught, culminates at the Supreme Court. The great questions of law and liberty are ultimately decided there, where landmark rulings are announced and history books are written.

But constitutional government does not survive because of a building on First Street. It survives because thousands of people, scattered across courtrooms and chambers throughout the country, decide every day that the law is something more than a suggestion.

At this moment, as tensions between executive power and constitutional limits continue to intensify, the burden of preserving that principle has fallen disproportionately on lower federal judges. They are the district court judges issuing emergency injunctions, the appellate judges reviewing con-

troversial executive actions, and the jurists whose names rarely become known beyond legal circles unless they happen to rule against someone powerful.

They are also increasingly the targets of public fury. The popular image of judicial independence often overlooks its human dimension. Courts are institutions, but judges are individuals. They read the headlines. They hear the attacks. They know that a controversial ruling may provoke political outrage, social media campaigns, threats, and demands for impeachment. They understand that their decisions may be dissected not merely as legal arguments but as ideological statements. Yet they are expected to continue performing the same task they have always performed: applying the law regardless of who approves.

That expectation is easy to celebrate in theory. It is far more difficult in practice. The American constitutional system was deliberately designed around friction. The framers did not trust concentrated power, and therefore they created a structure intended to slow it. Congress would check the president. Courts would check both. Ambition would counter ambition.

But constitutions are not self-executing documents. They do not leap from parchment to restrain officials on their own. Every constitutional limit ultimately depends on individuals willing to enforce it. When executive officials push beyond established boundaries, someone must say no. Increasingly, that someone is a district court judge.

This reality often frustrates critics who view lower courts as obstacles to decisive governance. Why, they ask, should a single judge in a regional courthouse be able to halt a national policy? Why should unelected officials stand in the way of elected leaders?



The answer is embedded in the constitutional structure itself. The judiciary was never designed to ratify power. It was designed to review it. The authority of courts does not derive from popularity. It derives from legitimacy. Their role is not to ask whether a policy polls well, energizes supporters, or advances a political agenda. Their role is to determine whether the policy complies with the law.

That distinction becomes most important precisely when it becomes most unpopular. History offers repeated examples of executive branches testing limits during periods of political stress. Sometimes those tests are justified by urgency. Sometimes by fear. Sometimes by genuine conviction that extraordinary circumstances require extraordinary measures. Yet the recurring lesson is that constitutional boundaries are most vulnerable when leaders believe their goals are too important to be constrained.

At such moments, lower courts become the first institutional responders. Long before constitutional disputes reach appellate panels or the Supreme Court, they arrive on the desk of a district judge. The filings are often urgent. The political pressure is immediate. The legal questions are unresolved. The consequences may be enormous.

The judge must decide anyway. This responsibility rarely receives the admiration afforded to more visible forms of public service. Judges are expected to remain restrained. They do not campaign for public approval. They do not appear regularly on television defending their decisions. Their ethical obligations often require silence in response to criticism.

As a result, they occupy a uniquely vulnerable position. They exercise significant authority while possessing limited ability to defend themselves in the public arena. That vulnerability has become increasingly pronounced as political culture grows more polarized.

Judicial decisions are now routinely interpreted through partisan lenses. A ruling favorable to one side is celebrated as courageous; an unfavorable ruling is denounced as corruption, activism, or obstruction. The legitimacy of courts is often treated as contingent upon agreement with outcomes. This trend poses a danger that extends beyond any single administration or political movement.

The judiciary functions only if losing parties continue to recognize its authority. The rule of law requires acceptance not merely of victories but of defeats. A constitutional system cannot survive if every adverse ruling is automatically characterized as evidence of illegitimacy.

The pressure on lower-court judges therefore extends beyond legal analysis. It increasingly involves defending, through their conduct, the idea that law remains distinct from politics. That defense requires a particular kind of courage. Not dramatic courage. Not cinematic heroism. Institutional courage.

The willingness to issue a ruling that powerful people may dislike. The willingness to apply precedent even when doing so invites criticism. The willingness to preserve procedural safeguards for individuals who are unpopular. The willingness to insist that legal authority must be justified rather than merely asserted.

These acts often appear mundane. They are anything but. Every constitutional democracy depends upon officials who choose conscience over convenience. For judges, conscience does not mean personal preference. It means fidelity to legal obligations despite external pressure to abandon them.

The temptation toward compliance is always present. It is easier to defer. Easier to avoid controversy. Easier to find procedural reasons not to engage difficult questions. Easier to allow political momentum to carry decisions forward unchecked.

The judges who resist those temptations rarely become household names. Yet their contribution may be among the most important in the constitutional system. When future generations evaluate periods of institutional strain, they will undoubtedly focus on presidents, legislators, movements, and landmark Supreme Court cases. Those are the figures and events that dominate historical narratives.

But history often turns on less visible actors. It turns on the district judge who refused to ignore a constitutional violation because doing so would have been politically expedient.

It turns on the appellate panel that insisted government actions meet legal standards rather than rhetorical ones. It turns on countless public servants who understood that their oath was not to an individual, a party, or a moment, but to a constitutional order larger than themselves.

Americans frequently speak of the Constitution as though it were an indestructible shield. In reality, its protections are only as durable as the people willing to enforce them. The nation's final line of defense against executive overreach is not a document stored behind glass. It is not a slogan. It is not even the Supreme Court alone.

It is found every day in regional courthouses across the country, where judges face pressure, criticism, and uncertainty yet continue to ask the same essential question: What does the law require? The answer to that question remains the foundation of constitutional government. And the courage to ask it may be one of the most important forms of public service in America today.



Free press is the cornerstone of democracy

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THE PATRONAGE OF THE PARDON

BY TIMOTHY DAVIES

The pardon power occupies a peculiar place in democratic government. It is one of the few authorities granted to an executive that is deliberately designed to operate outside the normal machinery of law. Courts determine guilt. Juries weigh evidence. Prosecutors bring charges. Yet at the end of that process, a president or governor may simply declare that punishment will not occur.

For centuries, defenders of executive clemency have justified this extraordinary authority as a safeguard against injustice. The pardon exists because legal systems are imperfect. Courts make mistakes. Prosecutors overreach. Sentences can be excessive. Mercy serves as a corrective when rigid legal procedures fail to account for humanity.

But what happens when mercy ceases to be the purpose of the pardon? What happens when clemency evolves from an instrument of justice into a form of political patronage?

The answer is not merely a distortion of constitutional design. It is the creation of a parallel legal system, one in which accountability becomes optional for the wealthy, the influential, and the politically useful.

The traditional image of a pardon is a sympathetic one. It involves a prisoner who has demonstrated rehabilitation, a wrongful conviction exposed by new evidence, or a punishment so disproportionate that intervention becomes morally necessary. Such cases reinforce public faith in the idea that justice must sometimes be tempered by compassion.



Yet modern politics has increasingly revealed another function of executive clemency. The pardon can become a reward. It can become payment for loyalty. It can become insurance for silence. Most troublingly, it can become a signal that certain individuals operate under a different set of rules than everyone else.



When clemency is distributed according to personal relationships rather than public principles, it ceases to resemble mercy. Instead, it begins to resemble patronage. The executive effectively gains the ability to dispense legal immunity as a political favor.

The danger extends beyond any single pardon recipient. The real consequence lies in the message communicated to everyone watching. Political allies learn that loyalty may carry legal benefits. Potential witnesses learn that cooperation with investigators may be less valuable than maintaining allegiance to powerful figures. Future officials learn that the boundaries of acceptable conduct expand when accountability can be negotiated away.

The pardon power thus becomes more than an isolated constitutional authority. It becomes part of a broader political incentive structure. This transformation is particularly dangerous when clemency appears designed to protect individuals connected to

the executive's own interests. In such cases, the pardon no longer functions as a check on injustice. Instead, it functions as a check on accountability itself.

The logic is straightforward. A criminal justice system depends upon the expectation that legal consequences will follow unlawful actions. Remove that expectation for a select group of people, and the deterrent effect of the law begins to collapse.

Imagine two defendants accused of similar misconduct. One faces the full weight of investigation, prosecution, trial, and punishment. The other possesses political connections that place executive intervention within reach.

Formally, both individuals exist under the same legal framework. Practically, they do not. One inhabits the ordinary justice system. The other inhabits a protected zone where legal outcomes are subject to political negotiation. This disparity undermines one of the central promises of democratic governance: equality before the law.

Americans often celebrate the principle that no person is above the law. The phrase appears in speeches, campaign advertisements, and judicial opinions. Yet slogans lose meaning when institutional behavior communicates the opposite.

A legal system does not demonstrate equality by proclaiming it. It demonstrates equality by applying consequences consistently.

When executive clemency repeatedly benefits those with proximity to power, the public receives a different lesson. The lesson is that laws remain binding for ordinary citizens while becoming flexible for elites.

That perception alone can be corrosive. Public trust in institutions depends heavily upon the belief that rules are applied fairly. Citizens are more willing to comply with laws when they believe those laws operate impartially. Conversely, perceptions of favoritism weaken social cohesion and encourage cynicism.

People begin to suspect that legal outcomes are determined less by conduct than by connections. They conclude that influence matters more than innocence. They see accountability not as a universal principle but as a privilege selectively imposed upon those lacking political protection.

Such conclusions may not always be entirely accurate. Yet once established, they become difficult to reverse. The long-term consequences extend beyond public confidence. Weaponized clemency can alter behavior throughout government itself. Officials who expect legal protection may become more willing to engage in ethically questionable conduct.

Political operatives may calculate that the risks associated with misconduct are manageable if executive intervention remains available. Subordinates may feel pressure to act in ways they otherwise would reject, believing that powerful patrons can shield them from consequences. The result is a culture of impunity.

Impunity thrives wherever accountability becomes uncertain. It flourishes when individuals conclude that enforcement mechanisms are negotiable. It expands when legal consequences depend upon political calculations rather than legal standards. The pardon power, used irresponsibly, can accelerate this process.

Defenders of expansive clemency often argue that the Constitution intentionally grants broad discretion to executives. That

observation is correct. The pardon power was designed to be powerful. It was never intended to be constrained by ordinary political considerations.

But constitutional authority and constitutional wisdom are not identical concepts. The fact that an action is legally permissible does not make it prudent. The fact that a power exists does not mean its abuse carries no consequences. Democratic systems depend not only upon formal rules but also upon informal norms. Officials routinely possess powers they could exercise more aggressively than they do. Institutional stability often relies upon restraint rather than prohibition.

The pardon power is no exception. Its legitimacy depends heavily upon public confidence that it is exercised in service of justice rather than personal advantage. Once that confidence erodes, the institution itself begins to lose credibility. The tragedy is that clemency remains a valuable and necessary tool. Wrongful convictions occur. Excessive punishments persist. Exceptional circumstances arise. Genuine mercy has an important place within any humane legal system.

Yet every instance of politically motivated clemency makes those legitimate uses more difficult to defend. Every pardon that appears transactional weakens public faith in pardons granted for worthy reasons. Every act of patronage disguised as mercy diminishes mercy itself.

The founders envisioned a pardon power capable of correcting injustice. They did not envision a mechanism for creating a protected class insulated from accountability. The distinction matters.

A society committed to the rule of law cannot sustain two tracks of justice indefinitely, one for ordinary citizens and another for those with access to political favor. The moment clemency becomes currency, exchanged for loyalty or silence, it ceases to function as a safeguard against injustice. Instead, it becomes a means of perpetuating it. And when the powerful can reliably escape consequences through personal connections, the rule of law does not disappear all at once. It simply becomes something reserved for everyone else. ■



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*We are living in an age of political illusions.
The old binaries, democracy versus dictatorship,
the free world versus authoritarianism,
have blurred.*

The rise of illiberal democracies
by Thanos Kalamidas

WHEN COURTS BECOME THE ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

BY EZE OGBU

In every democracy, the judiciary is supposed to serve as the final shield between citizens and the abuse of power. Legislatures may become partisan. Presidents and prime ministers may become authoritarian. Police forces may become politicized. Yet courts are expected to remain independent, impartial, and committed to justice. When they fail, the consequences reach far beyond legal disputes. The entire social contract begins to unravel.

Across parts of Africa, particularly in countries such as Uganda and Nigeria, many citizens increasingly view the judiciary not as a guardian of rights but as an extension of political and economic elites. Whether this perception is fully justified in every case is almost beside the point. Public trust in the courts has deteriorated to such an extent that

many ordinary people no longer expect justice. They expect influence, connections, money, or political patronage to determine outcomes.



This is a devastating development for any society. The judiciary derives its authority not from armies, police forces, or elections. Its power rests on legitimacy. Judges do not command battalions. They command respect. Citizens obey court rulings because they believe the courts are acting fairly and according to law. Once that belief disappears, judicial institutions become little more than ceremonial structures draped in legal language.

Many Africans today find themselves trapped between governments that claim democratic legitimacy and institutions that often appear unable or unwilling to restrain executive power. Election disputes frequently become flashpoints. Courts are expected to serve as neutral arbiters when allegations of irregularities arise. Instead, judicial rulings are often met with skepticism, suspicion, and accusations of political bias.

The result is a dangerous cycle. Citizens lose confidence in the courts. Governments face fewer meaningful checks on their authority. Political actors increasingly view legal processes as tools to secure power rather than mechanisms for ensuring justice. Over time, legal institutions begin to resemble instruments of political management rather than independent branches of government.

In Uganda, critics have long argued that judicial independence has been weakened by the overwhelming influence of the executive branch. Court decisions involving politically sensitive matters are often scrutinized not only for their legal reasoning but for what they reveal about the balance of power within the state. For many Ugandans, the question is no longer whether the law will prevail but whether political interests will.

Nigeria presents a different but equally troubling challenge. Despite having one of Africa's largest and most sophisticated legal systems, allegations of corruption, delays, and political interference continue to undermine confidence in judicial institutions. Cases can drag on for years. Wealthy individuals often appear capable of navigating legal obstacles that would overwhelm ordinary citizens. The perception that justice is available for purchase is among the most corrosive beliefs any society can develop.

When courts become associated with privilege rather than fairness, they cease to function as equalizers. Instead, they become amplifiers of inequality. This perception has profound consequences beyond politics. Investors become hesitant to commit capital where contracts may not be enforced impartially. Entrepreneurs become reluctant to take risks when legal disputes cannot be resolved fairly. Citizens become less willing to obey laws

they believe are selectively enforced. The economy suffers, social tensions rise and democratic institutions weaken.

Perhaps most alarming is the impact on public psychology. Citizens who lose faith in the judiciary often lose faith in peaceful methods of resolving disputes. If courts cannot deliver justice, people begin searching for alternatives. Some turn to patronage networks. Others seek protection from ethnic, religious or regional groups. In the worst cases, frustration spills into unrest and violence.

History repeatedly demonstrates that societies cannot remain stable when large portions of the population believe legal institutions are fundamentally compromised.

None of this means that judges themselves are solely responsible. Judicial systems operate within broader political environments. Governments control budgets. Legislatures shape laws.



Security agencies enforce or fail to enforce court orders. Corruption within society often reflects deeper governance failures that extend well beyond the courthouse.

Yet judges occupy a uniquely important position. Their duty is not merely to interpret statutes. It is to defend the principle that no individual, no corporation, and no government official stands above the law. When courts abandon that responsibility, they cease to serve the public and begin serving power.

The tragedy is that many African countries possess extraordinary legal talent. Their law schools produce brilliant lawyers. Their constitutions often contain strong protections for civil liberties. Their legal traditions are rich and sophisticated. The problem is rarely a lack of legal knowledge. It is a lack of institutional courage and independence.

Restoring confidence in the judiciary will require more than speeches about reform. It will require transparent appointments, meaningful accountability, stronger protections for judicial independence, and a demonstrated willingness to challenge powerful interests when the law demands it. Citizens must see evidence that courts are prepared to rule against governments, wealthy individuals, and politically connected actors when justice requires such outcomes.

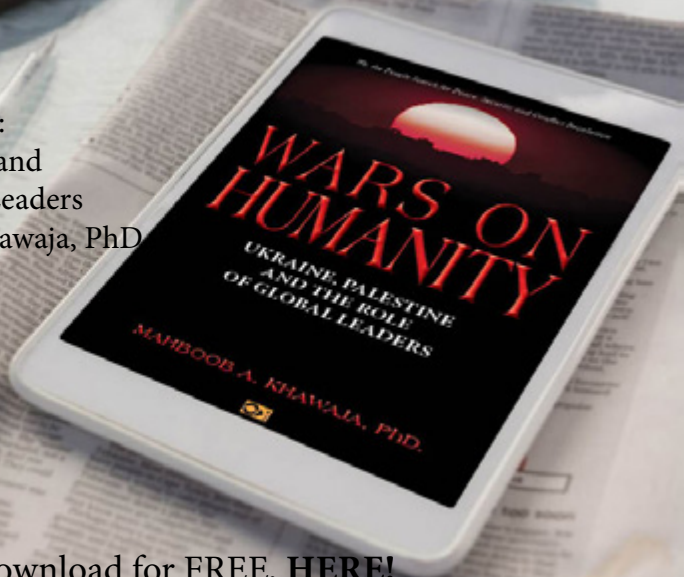
Trust cannot be legislated into existence. It must be earned. The greatest danger facing countries where judicial credibility has eroded is not merely corruption or inefficiency. It is the normalization of public cynicism. Once citizens come to believe that justice is impossible, democratic institutions become hollow shells. Elections lose legitimacy. Constitutions lose authority. Laws become suggestions rather than binding principles.

A nation can survive flawed politicians. It can survive economic hardship. It can even survive periods of political instability. What it cannot easily survive is the collapse of faith in the institutions meant to uphold justice. When courts are seen as partners of a corrupt authoritarian oligarchy rather than defenders of the people, they stop functioning as pillars of democracy. They become symbols of its decline.

And when that happens, the greatest threat is not merely what citizens lose in the courtroom. It is what they lose in their belief that justice itself is possible. ■



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OF THE PEOPLE

**A DEMOCRACY DIES NOT
IN THE DARK, BUT IN THE
BRIGHT GLARE OF **APATHY.****

RULING BY DEFIANCE

BY JOHN KATO

There is a comforting assumption embedded deep within American civic life, when a court issues an order, the government obeys it. The assumption is so fundamental that most citizens rarely think about it. Court rulings may be controversial. They may be celebrated or condemned. Politicians may criticize them. Legal scholars may debate them for decades. Yet the basic expectation remains that judicial decisions are not optional suggestions. They are binding commands.

That expectation is not merely a matter of legal procedure. It is one of the pillars holding up the constitutional system itself. The judiciary occupies a peculiar position in American government. Congress controls the purse. The executive branch commands the military, oversees law enforcement and administers the vast machinery of government. Federal judges, by contrast, possess neither armies nor budgets. They cannot personally enforce their rulings. They depend upon something less tangible but historically more powerful: legitimacy.

The authority of the courts rests on the willingness of elected officials and citizens alike to accept that judicial decisions carry binding force, even when those decisions are inconvenient, unpopular or politically costly.

That arrangement has survived wars, economic crises, political scandals and periods of intense national division. It has endured because leaders of both parties generally understood that the alternative would be far more dangerous than any individual court ruling. But what happens when the executive branch decides that judicial orders can be ignored? The answer is simple and alarming. Judicial review ceases to exist.

This danger does not begin with outright refusal. A president does not need to stand before cameras and declare a court powerless. The erosion can occur



through delay, obstruction and selective compliance. Orders can be “reviewed.” Instructions can be subjected to endless administrative reconsideration. Agencies can interpret mandates so narrowly that compliance becomes functionally meaningless.

The effect is often identical. A right recognized by a court is worthless if the government refuses to implement it. A constitutional protection is hollow if officials can indefinitely postpone compliance. A judicial order that remains unenforced is little different from one that was never issued.

This is why executive non-compliance represents a threat far larger than any single legal dispute. The issue is not whether a particular court ruling is correct. Courts make mistakes. They always have. The legal system includes appeals processes precisely because judges are not infallible.

The issue is whether the executive branch retains the power to decide which judicial rulings deserve obedience. If the answer becomes yes, then the courts no longer function as an independent branch of government. They become advisers whose opinions carry force only when the executive chooses to honor them.

That would mark a profound transformation of the American constitutional order. The framers designed the separation of powers around mutual constraints. Congress checks the president. The president checks Congress. Courts review the actions of both. No institution enjoys unlimited authority because each is balanced against the others. Remove one of those constraints, and the equilibrium collapses.

Imagine a Congress that openly refused to recognize presidential vetoes. Imagine a president who announced that con-

gressional appropriations were merely recommendations. Such actions would immediately be recognized as constitutional crises.

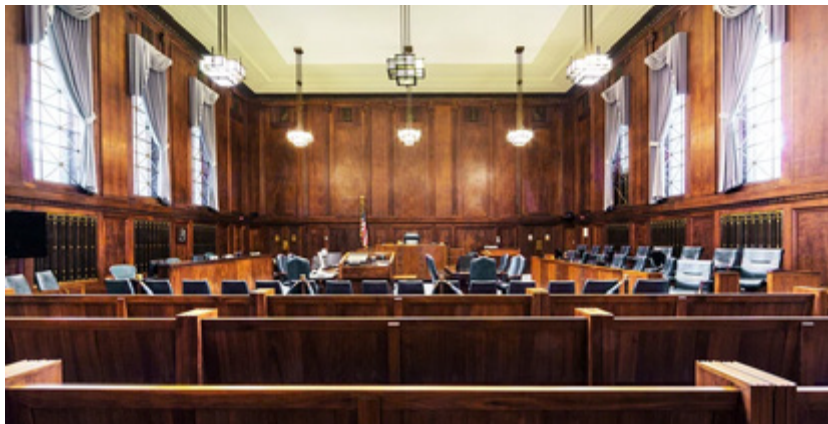
Executive defiance of judicial authority belongs in the same category. Yet it can appear less dramatic because it often unfolds incrementally. A delayed response here. A narrow interpretation there. A claim of administrative difficulty. A promise of future compliance that never quite materializes.

Each individual episode may seem manageable. Collectively, however, they establish a precedent. And precedents matter. The greatest danger is not what happens when a favored administration uses such tactics. The greatest danger is what happens when the next administration inherits the precedent. Political power changes hands. It always does.

Authorities created for one president eventually become available to another. Exceptions justified under one set of circumstances become available under entirely different circumstances. History repeatedly demonstrates that constitutional shortcuts rarely remain confined to their original purpose.

Those cheering executive resistance today may discover tomorrow that the precedent survives long after the political circumstances that inspired it. A government that can disregard court orders in pursuit of one objective can disregard them in pursuit of another. A president empowered to ignore rulings he dislikes has effectively acquired the authority to determine the limits of his own power. No constitutional system can safely operate under that principle.

The judiciary's dependence on voluntary compliance has long been viewed as a potential weakness. In reality, it has been one



of the republic's greatest strengths. It reflects a national commitment to the rule of law over the rule of individuals.

The courts issue decisions because the Constitution grants them that role. The executive obeys because the Constitution requires it. The system functions because each branch accepts limits on its own authority.

Once that acceptance disappears, the written Constitution becomes increasingly irrelevant. The words remain. The institutions remain. The ceremonies remain. But the substance changes.

A nation may continue holding elections, maintaining courts and preserving constitutional language while gradually abandoning constitutional governance. The distinction between law and power becomes blurred. Judicial decisions become contingent on political convenience. Rights become dependent on executive discretion.

That is not a theoretical concern. It is the pattern through which democratic institutions have weakened in countries around the world. Rarely does constitutional decline arrive through a dra-

matic announcement that the rule of law has ended. More often, it emerges through repeated acts of defiance that become normalized over time. The danger lies not only in the defiance itself but in society's growing willingness to treat it as routine.

Americans should resist that temptation. One need not agree with every court decision to recognize the necessity of judicial authority. One need not admire every judge to understand the importance of an independent judiciary. The legitimacy of the courts cannot depend on whether citizens happen to like a particular ruling.

If obedience becomes conditional upon agreement, constitutional government becomes impossible. The question is ultimately larger than any president, administration or legal controversy. It concerns whether the United States remains a nation governed by laws that bind everyone, including those who wield executive power.

The judiciary possesses no army. It commands no police force. It cannot compel obedience through strength alone. Its authority rests on a shared constitutional understanding that court orders matter. If that understanding is allowed to erode, the consequences will extend far beyond any single case. The damage will reach the foundations of the separation of powers itself.

And once a government learns it can rule by defiance, restoring the authority of law becomes far more difficult than preserving it in the first place. ■





August 2026

THE FRANCHISE OF JURIDICAL ILLIBERALISM

BY MIA RODRÍGUEZ

Democracies rarely collapse in a single dramatic moment. The image most people have of authoritarianism, tanks in the streets, parliaments shuttered overnight, opposition leaders disappearing into prisons, belongs to an older era. Today's democratic erosion is often quieter. It arrives through legal arguments, executive orders, political appointments, and carefully crafted claims that institutions are not being destroyed but merely "reformed."

The most dangerous weapon of modern autocracy is not the rejection of democracy. It is the imitation of democracy's language while dismantling its foundations.

Around the world, leaders who once looked to Western democracies as models are increasingly studying their weaknesses instead. They watch how executive power can be expanded, how inde-

pendent institutions can be portrayed as enemies of the people, and how courts can be transformed from guardians of constitutional limits into targets of political warfare.

For decades, authoritarian governments borrowed the symbols of democracy: elections, legislatures, constitutions, and courts. Now, a new generation of illiberal leaders is borrowing something else, the tactics of democratic backsliding itself. And the example that carries the greatest influence is not a small or fragile democracy. It is the United States. The world's oldest continuous constitutional democracy has long represented an idea: that power must have limits, that no leader stands above the law and that independent courts exist precisely because governments cannot always be trusted with unchecked authority.

When that principle appears negotiable, the consequences extend far beyond America's borders. The judiciary has always been the place where democracy's promises become enforceable. A legislature may pass laws. A president may issue orders. But courts determine whether those actions are consistent with the rules that bind everyone, including those who hold power.

That role makes judges a natural target for leaders who want fewer obstacles. The authoritarian playbook is remarkably consistent. First comes the accusation: the courts are not neutral. They are political. They are controlled by elites. They are blocking the will of ordinary citizens. Then comes the solution: weaken judicial independence, replace judges with loyalists, ignore rulings that are inconvenient, or redefine constitutional limits as illegitimate interference.

The argument is always framed as restoring democracy. The reality is often the opposite. A democracy without independent



institutions is not a stronger democracy. It is merely an election system where the winner is allowed to do whatever they want.

That distinction matters because elections alone do not guarantee freedom. History is filled with governments that won popular support and then used that power to dismantle the very systems that allowed voters to choose them in the first place. The lesson has been understood by leaders across continents.

In Europe, political movements that once operated at the margins have studied how to attack courts, civil servants, journalists, and universities by portraying them as obstacles to national renewal. The goal is not always to abolish institutions outright. It is to make citizens distrust them until their authority disappears.

In Latin America, where memories of military rule and strong-man politics remain powerful, executives have repeatedly attempted to expand presidential authority by claiming that judges, prosecutors, and oversight bodies are preventing governments from delivering what voters demanded.

In Asia, leaders have watched how democratic systems can be hollowed out while maintaining the appearance of constitutional order. The lesson is that institutions do not have to be eliminated if they can be captured.

This is the franchise model of modern illiberalism: a set of strategies that can be exported, adapted, and reused. The irony is that authoritarian leaders do not need to convince people that democracy is bad. They only need to convince them that democracy has failed because the wrong people are controlling its institutions.

The judiciary becomes the perfect target because courts are designed to frustrate immediate political desires. A court that blocks a government action can be portrayed as undemocratic, even when the court is fulfilling the very purpose democracy assigned to it.

This is why attacks on judges are so powerful politically. They transform a constitutional argument into a cultural battle. A legal dispute becomes a fight between “the people” and “the establishment.”

Once that framework takes hold, every independent institution becomes vulnerable.

A free press becomes “biased.”

A civil service becomes “the deep state.”

Election officials become “traitors.”

Judges become “activists.”

The pattern is not new. What is new is how easily the pattern travels.

Modern authoritarianism is no longer confined by borders. Political movements learn from one another. They observe which strategies succeed, which messages resonate, and which institutions can be weakened without triggering immediate public resistance.

The danger is not that one country's political conflict will be copied exactly somewhere else. The danger is that leaders elsewhere will recognize the opportunity: if even the strongest democracies can be pressured into accepting attacks on judicial independence, then the global standard has changed.

For decades, international human rights frameworks rested on an assumption that democratic institutions could provide a barrier against abuse. Courts, independent prosecutors, and constitutional limits were not merely domestic arrangements. They were part of a global understanding that power must be restrained.

But institutions are only as strong as the willingness to defend them. A constitution cannot protect itself. A court cannot enforce its authority if political leaders convince citizens that every unfavorable ruling is illegitimate. Laws do not maintain democracy; democratic culture does.

The greatest threat facing democracies today is not simply authoritarian leaders. It is the normalization of authoritarian methods. A generation ago, democratic erosion often looked like a dramatic rupture. Today, it looks like a debate over procedures. It looks like a fight over appointments. It looks like a dispute over whether a court has "too much power."

That is what makes it dangerous. The institutions of democracy are rarely destroyed by people openly declaring war on democracy. They are weakened by people claiming they are saving it.

The world has spent centuries learning that unchecked executive power is dangerous. That lesson produced constitutional systems designed to prevent any single leader, party, or movement from becoming stronger than the rules themselves.

The challenge now is whether democracies will remember why those limits exist. The future of democracy may not be decided by whether countries hold elections. Many authoritarian governments hold elections. It will be decided by whether those elections exist within a system where power can still be challenged, leaders can still lose and courts can still say no.

When the judiciary falls silent, democracy does not always end immediately. Sometimes it simply stops being able to defend itself. And that is the lesson the new authoritarians have learned: the easiest way to defeat democracy is not always to attack it from the outside. Sometimes the most effective strategy is to copy it and then quietly remove everything that makes it work. ■



WHY JUDICIAL ACCOUNTA- BILITY NEEDS A NEW FOUN- DATION

BY MATHEW WALLS

For generations, courts have defended one principle above all others: judges must be independent. The idea is fundamental to any functioning democracy. A judge cannot fear political retaliation, public pressure or personal consequences for issuing a lawful decision. Without independence, justice becomes a performance dictated by whoever holds power.

But independence has slowly evolved into something more complicated and more dangerous. A shield designed to protect impartial decision-making has sometimes become a barrier against meaningful accountability. The legal system has created a paradox: the people responsible for deciding

whether a judge is capable of judging themselves are often judges, evaluated through standards created and interpreted by lawyers.

Nowhere is this paradox clearer than in the doctrine of apparent or apprehended bias. The current test asks a deceptively simple question: would a fair-minded and informed observer conclude that there is a real possibility that the judge is biased?

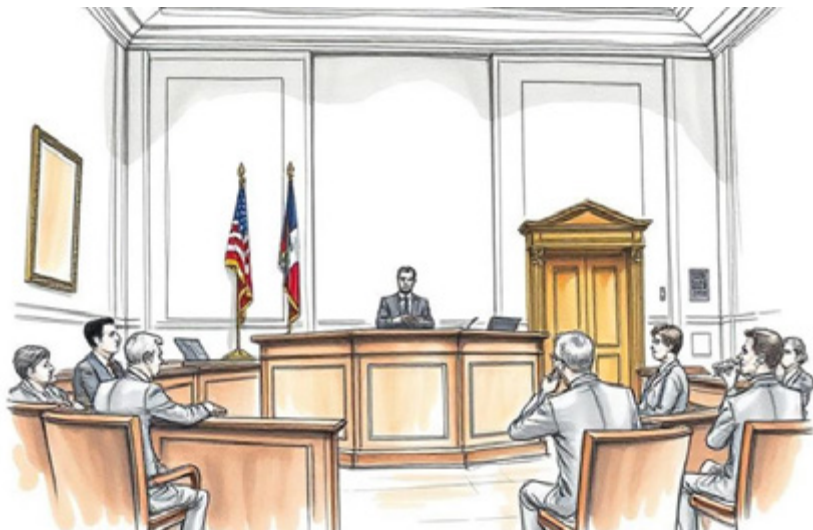
At first glance, this appears to be a reasonable safeguard. It does not require proving actual prejudice. It recognizes that justice must not only be done but must also be seen to be done.

But hidden inside the test is a remarkable assumption: that there exists a neutral, perfectly rational observer capable of evaluating judicial impartiality. This observer is calm, informed, detached and free from emotion. This observer understands the legal system, respects judicial independence and somehow reaches the correct conclusion.

The problem is that this observer does not exist. The “fair-minded observer” is a legal creation, an intellectual construct built by judges and lawyers. It is the legal profession imagining the perspective of society and then using that imagined perspective to judge itself. It is, in effect, a system grading its own homework.

The law frequently relies on fictional tools. Legal systems create concepts such as the “reasonable person,” the “ordinary consumer” or the “objective observer” because the law needs standards beyond individual opinion.

But when the issue is the credibility of the legal system itself, the fiction becomes far more problematic. Bias is not always obvious. Modern psychology has demonstrated that human beings are often unaware of their own assumptions, loyalties and uncon-



scious preferences. Experience can create wisdom, but it can also create blind spots.

A judge who has spent decades within a particular legal culture may naturally understand the world through that culture's assumptions. A senior lawyer may see a professional relationship as harmless because everyone in the profession understands its boundaries. A member of the judiciary may see a connection as irrelevant because they personally believe they can remain neutral.

The public may see something different. A citizen outside the legal profession may not share the same assumptions. They may reasonably ask, why should this judge decide this matter? Why should someone with this relationship, history or connection be the person determining another person's fate?

The answer cannot simply be: because other lawyers and judges understand that the relationship is acceptable. That is not independence. That is institutional self-confidence.

The legal profession has always valued self-regulation. There are good reasons for this. Courts require expertise. Complex legal questions cannot be decided by popularity contests. Judges must be protected from temporary public anger and political campaigns.

But expertise can become isolation. Institutions develop their own cultures. They create their own language, traditions and assumptions. Over time, what appears reasonable inside the institution may appear deeply questionable outside it.

The problem is not that judges are dishonest. The problem is that no human institution is immune from human limitations. A judge can sincerely believe they are impartial and still fail to recognize circumstances that create an appearance of unfairness.

A legal system that acknowledges human imperfection should design safeguards around that reality. Instead, the current structure often places the burden of recognizing bias on the very person least likely to identify it: the person whose impartiality is being questioned.

The judge becomes the investigator, the decision-maker and the final authority on whether they should leave the case.

This is an uncomfortable arrangement. In almost every other area of public life, we recognize that conflicts of interest should be reviewed by independent bodies. Yet judicial conflicts are frequently handled through internal processes dominated by the judiciary itself.

The message to the public is confusing, trust us because we are independent and trust us because we decide whether our independence is compromised.

There is a misunderstanding at the heart of the debate. Judicial independence does not mean judicial immunity from scrutiny. A strong judiciary is not one that avoids accountability. It is one that can survive accountability.



Doctors are independent professionals, but medical boards exist. Scientists operate independently, but research ethics committees exist. Corporate executives make decisions, but independent oversight exists.

The purpose of oversight is not to undermine expertise. It is to protect public confidence. The same principle should apply to judges. The question should not be whether judges are capable of deciding their own conflicts. Many are. The question is whether the system should depend entirely on that capability.

A democracy should not rely on the assumption that every individual will always recognize their own blind spots.

The solution is not to weaken courts. It is to modernize accountability. Decisions about whether a judge should recuse

themselves should move away from being primarily internal judicial decisions and toward an independent, rapid-response process.

A new judicial accountability council could provide that structure. Such a body should not be political. It should not replace judicial expertise. Instead, it should combine different forms of knowledge.

The current model and a possible future model would look very different,

Judge questioned about their own impartiality - Independent council reviews possible conflicts

Legal professionals define the standard alone - Lawyers, ethicists, behavioral scientists and public representatives contribute

Focus on whether bias can be proven through legal reasoning
- Focus on maintaining public confidence through broader analysis

Slow internal procedures - Fast decisions before proceedings are affected

Institutional culture evaluates institutional culture - External perspectives challenge institutional assumptions

Recusal viewed as an exceptional event - Recusal viewed as a normal safeguard

The goal is not to remove judges from the process. Judges possess essential knowledge about the law and judicial duties. But they should not be the only voices determining whether the public should trust the process.

One of the greatest weaknesses of modern legal reasoning is that it often treats bias as a purely intellectual problem. It asks, what would a rational person conclude? But human behavior is not purely rational. Behavioral science has repeatedly shown that people underestimate their own unconscious influences. Expertise does not eliminate bias. Sometimes expertise creates confidence that bias is absent.

A new accountability system should include people who understand human decision-making, perception and institutional behavior. The law has spent centuries refining rules of evidence and procedure. It should now apply the same seriousness to understanding the human beings who operate the system.

Critics will argue that external oversight threatens judicial independence. But this misunderstands the proposal. The purpose is not to allow public opinion to control judges. The purpose is to ensure that public confidence does not depend on judges asking the public to simply accept their own conclusions.

A truly independent judiciary should welcome transparent safeguards. If a judge is obviously impartial, an independent review will confirm that. If there is a legitimate concern, the system will address it before trust is damaged. Either outcome strengthens the courts.

The greatest institutions are not those that claim perfection. They are those that recognize their vulnerability. The judiciary occupies a unique position in society. Judges have the authority to make decisions affecting liberty, property, reputation and personal rights. With that authority comes a responsibility to create systems that are visibly fair.

The fair-minded observer was created as a protection against hidden bias. But a fictional observer cannot carry the entire burden of protecting public confidence. A modern justice system must move beyond imagined neutrality and toward measurable accountability.

The question should no longer be, “Would a fictional reasonable observer think this judge is biased?” The better question is, “Has society created a process strong enough that people can trust the answer?” Judicial independence is essential. But independence without accountability risks becoming isolation. The future of justice depends not on protecting institutions from scrutiny, but on creating institutions confident enough to withstand it. ■



THE ALGORITHM IN THE DOCK

BY THANOS KALAMIDAS

Artificial intelligence has arrived at the courthouse long before the law has decided whether it belongs there. It writes contracts, analyses evidence, predicts criminal behaviour, drafts legal arguments, translates testimony, and increasingly influences decisions that affect liberty, property and reputation. Yet the most pressing question is not whether AI will transform international justice. It already has. The question is whether international judicature is intellectually, ethically and institutionally prepared for a world where machines participate in the administration of justice.

The uncomfortable answer is probably not. International justice has always moved at the speed of diplomacy rather than technology. Courts deliberate carefully because legitimacy depends on caution. Artificial intelligence evolves with the impatience of venture capital, software updates and competitive markets. These two worlds operate according to entirely different clocks. One values precedent. The



other celebrates disruption. One asks whether something ought to be done. The other asks whether it can be done faster.

This collision was inevitable. International courts were designed to judge wars, borders, genocide, treaties and crimes against humanity through the testimony of human beings and the interpretation of human intention. AI complicates every one of these assumptions. Deepfakes blur evidence. Autonomous systems complicate military responsibility. Predictive algorithms influence policing before crimes occur. Language models generate documents that appear authentic while containing subtle fabrications. The courtroom is entering an era where seeing is no longer believing.

Justice has traditionally depended on trust in evidence. Artificial intelligence quietly erodes that foundation. Imagine an international tribunal examining alleged war crimes where every photograph, intercepted communication and video recording could have been synthetically altered. Experts become less certain. Defence lawyers become more sceptical. Prosecutors become more

cautious. Judges become overwhelmed by competing technical analyses that few legal professionals fully understand.

The danger is not merely technological. It is philosophical. Justice has always assumed that responsibility belongs to people. Artificial intelligence introduces actors without moral agency yet capable of producing enormous consequences. When an autonomous military drone mistakenly targets civilians, who stands before the court? The programmer? The manufacturer? The commanding officer? The political leadership? The company that supplied training data? Or the algorithm itself, which cannot be imprisoned, punished or morally condemned?

International law was never built for defendants that cannot experience guilt. Nor was it designed for corporations whose algorithms evolve continuously after deployment. Traditional legal frameworks expect products to remain largely static. Artificial intelligence learns, adapts and changes through interaction. Responsibility becomes diffuse, scattered across thousands of engineers, datasets, updates and decisions made over many years.

Justice prefers clear chains of accountability. Artificial intelligence specialises in making them disappear. Yet rejecting AI altogether would be equally misguided. Courts already struggle with impossible workloads. International tribunals often spend years processing mountains of evidence. AI can translate thousands of pages within hours, identify inconsistencies across witness statements, organise complex financial records and detect patterns that human investigators might overlook.

These are extraordinary tools. The problem begins when tools quietly become decision-makers. Efficiency has always tempted legal systems. Every generation believes it has discovered meth-

ods to make justice faster. But speed has never been justice's highest virtue. Fairness is. A flawed human judgment delivered slowly is regrettable. A flawed algorithmic judgment delivered instantly and repeated thousands of times becomes systemic injustice disguised as technological progress.

There is another irony worth considering. Artificial intelligence is often presented as objective because it lacks emotions. Yet algorithms inherit the prejudices embedded in their training data, their design choices and the priorities of those who build them. Human bias does not disappear inside software. It becomes mathematically refined, statistically disguised and technologically amplified.

An international court relying heavily on opaque AI systems risks replacing transparent human imperfection with invisible computational imperfection.

That is not progress. It is merely a different costume for the same old problem. The challenge extends beyond courtrooms. Nations themselves are beginning to deploy AI in surveillance, border control, sanctions enforcement and military operations. International law increasingly finds itself regulating decisions that no human directly made. The old legal vocabulary struggles to describe new realities. Concepts such as intent, negligence and proportionality become more complicated when algorithms participate in every stage of decision-making.

Law evolves through language. Technology evolves by making old language obsolete. Perhaps the greatest risk is not malicious artificial intelligence but institutional complacency. Governments may become too eager to embrace systems promising efficiency while avoiding the difficult political conversations surrounding



accountability. Judges may defer to technical expertise they cannot independently evaluate. Lawyers may become dependent upon software whose reasoning remains proprietary and inaccessible.

Justice cannot function as a black box. Every judgment must remain explainable, challengeable and open to scrutiny. If even the creators of sophisticated AI systems struggle to explain precisely how certain conclusions emerge, courts should hesitate before allowing those conclusions to shape legal outcomes.

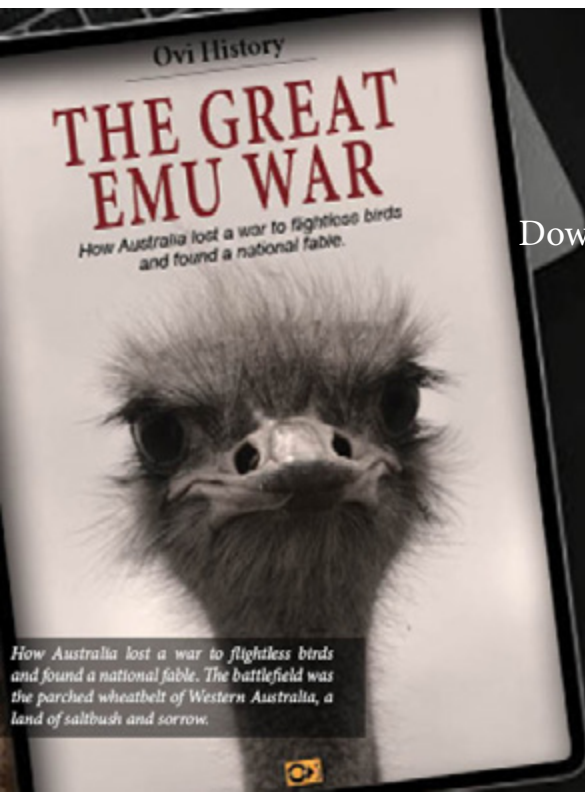
International justice ultimately derives its legitimacy not from perfection but from public confidence that decisions are reasoned, transparent and fundamentally human. Citizens accept adverse judgments because they believe another human being listened, deliberated and exercised moral responsibility.

An algorithm cannot bear that burden. Artificial intelligence will undoubtedly become indispensable to international judiciary. It will improve investigations, accelerate research and strengthen administrative efficiency. Properly supervised, it may

even reduce certain forms of human error. But justice itself cannot be outsourced to probability models, however sophisticated they become.

The law exists not merely to process facts but to interpret humanity in all its contradictions, frailties and moral complexity. Courts are places where empathy, context and conscience remain as essential as evidence.

Artificial intelligence may become justice's most powerful assistant. It must never become its final judge. ■



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The Great Emu War



**POVERTY
HAS NO
AGE
GENDER
COLOUR
RELIGION
POLITICS
NO MERCY**



August 2026

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND JUSTICE: ENSURING THAT INNOVA- TION SERVES INCLUSION

BY VALENTINA CARVAJAL CABALLERO

This very event of the Global Academy (GAFG) was truly an opportunity to exchange ideas with professionals from different regions and disciplines who share a common interest in the future of governance. For me, the programme stood out not only because of the quality of its discussions, but because it created an atmosphere where different experiences were genuinely valued and practical solutions received as much attention as theoretical concepts.

Working as a Senior Consultant, I have often found that the success of any reform depends less on the ambition of a strategy than on the ability of



institutions to implement it effectively. Policies, regulations and technological tools all require capable organisations, informed leadership and public confidence. This practical perspective shaped the way I experienced this Event. The discussions consistently returned to the question of how institutions can adapt responsibly while preserving the principles that give them legitimacy.

One of the programme's greatest strengths was the diversity of its participants. Bringing together judges, academics, diplomats, legal practitioners, policymakers and governance experts created conversations that would rarely occur within a single professional setting. Each participant approached the issues from a different perspective, yet the exchange remained constructive and focused on identifying shared challenges rather than defending individual positions.

From a Canadian perspective, this international exchange was especially valuable. Canada has long recognised the importance of evidence-based policymaking, public consultation and institutional accountability. At the same time, no country has all the answers. Listening to colleagues from Europe, Asia, Africa and other regions demonstrated that innovation is shaped by different legal traditions, administrative structures and cultural contexts. These differences should not be viewed as barriers but as opportunities to learn from one another.

This Event also reminded us that governance is ultimately about people. Technology continues to evolve at remarkable speed, but institutions succeed because of leadership, integrity and the confidence they inspire. Whatever tools governments adopt in the future, they must remain consistent with the broader public interest and the values upon which democratic societies depend.

I particularly appreciated the contributions of internationally recognised experts, including Pascal Lamy, Ernest Petrič and Fernando Messias. Although their professional backgrounds differ considerably, each highlighted the importance of international cooperation, responsible leadership and strong institutions. Their insights enriched the discussions and encouraged participants to think beyond their own professional or national perspectives.

Another aspect of the programme that deserves recognition is its emphasis on collaboration across disciplines. Many of today's governance challenges cannot be addressed by lawyers, policymakers or technology specialists working independently. Sustainable solutions require continuous dialogue among different professions, each bringing its own expertise while remaining open to new ideas. The GAFG created precisely this kind of environment.

For me, one of the most important GAFG's outcomes was the network of relationships established among participants. Conferences are often judged by the quality of their presentations, but their lasting value frequently lies in the professional connections they create. These relationships encourage future cooperation, comparative research and the exchange of practical experience long after the formal programme has concluded.

As someone engaged in strategic advisory work, I also found the GAFG refreshing because it focused on implementation rather than aspiration alone. Discussions acknowledged that meaningful change requires careful planning, institutional commitment and continuous learning. Good governance is never achieved through technology by itself; it is built through capable institutions and informed decision-making.



The publication of these proceedings ensures that the conversations initiated during the Academy will continue to reach a wider audience. More importantly, they provide a foundation for future collaboration among professionals committed to strengthening governance in an increasingly interconnected world.

Looking back on the GAFG, I see its greatest achievement in its ability to bring together diverse voices around a shared commitment to responsible governance. The programme demonstrated that meaningful international cooperation begins with open dialogue, mutual respect and a willingness to learn from different experiences. Those principles are as relevant to future governance as any technological innovation, and they will remain essential as our institutions continue to evolve.

It was a privilege to be part of this initiative, and I look forward to seeing the partnerships and ideas developed during this and other GAFG's related events continue to grow through future collaboration, research and professional exchange.

* * * * *

Valentina Carvajal Caballero, Senior Research and author,
Bogota, Colombia ■



ALGORITHM IN ROBES

BY JENNIFER STEPHENSON

Justice has always relied on an illusion that societies desperately want to believe: that human beings, despite all their flaws, can rise above prejudice long enough to judge one another fairly. It has never been entirely true. Judges carry their own experiences into the courtroom. Jurors bring hidden assumptions. Prosecutors and defence lawyers exploit emotion as much as evidence. The legal system has never been a machine of perfect neutrality. Yet, as artificial intelligence marches into the courts promising greater efficiency, consistency and speed, we risk replacing imperfect human judgment with something potentially far more dangerous: the illusion of mathematical objectivity.

Artificial intelligence has become the latest miracle salesman. It promises to sort evidence faster than armies of clerks, detect fraud within seconds, predict case outcomes and even recommend sentences. Court administrators see shrinking budgets and expanding caseloads and naturally wonder

why software should not shoulder part of the burden. Politicians hear the language of innovation and imagine modernising justice without paying for more judges. Technology companies see perhaps the most valuable market of all: governments willing to purchase systems that appear scientific.

The temptation is understandable. Justice, however, is not merely a logistical challenge. It is a profoundly human act. An algorithm can calculate probabilities. It cannot experience mercy.



The danger does not begin when artificial intelligence replaces judges. It begins much earlier, when it quietly becomes the invisible adviser whose recommendations nobody wishes to question. Human beings possess an unfortunate tendency to trust computers more than themselves, even when the computers are demonstrably wrong. The cleaner the interface and the more impressive the charts, the more authority software seems to acquire. A recommendation generated in milliseconds somehow appears less biased than one reached after days of thoughtful reflection, despite being built upon historical decisions made by equally imperfect humans.

Artificial intelligence does not emerge from nowhere. It learns from history, and history is rarely fair. If previous sentencing reflected racial disparities, economic inequalities or institutional prejudices, then AI trained on those records may faithfully reproduce those distortions. The machine does not discriminate because it hates. It discriminates because it has been taught that discrimination resembles reality.

That distinction offers little comfort to the individual standing before the bench. There is another subtle shift occurring beneath the excitement surrounding legal technology. Justice has always demanded explanation. Judges write opinions. They justify conclusions. Their reasoning can be challenged, criticised and appealed. Explainability is one of the pillars upon which legal legitimacy rests.

Many advanced AI systems struggle precisely where justice cannot afford ambiguity. They often produce remarkably accurate predictions while remaining notoriously difficult to explain. Even their creators cannot always identify why one conclusion emerged rather than another. Such opacity might be acceptable when recommending a film or filtering spam emails. It becomes intolerable when determining whether someone loses liberty, property or reputation.

Imagine standing before a court and hearing that your sentence was influenced by a system whose reasoning no expert can fully describe.

One need not be a legal philosopher to recognise something profoundly unsettling about that prospect. Supporters argue that artificial intelligence merely assists rather than replaces judges. Yet history teaches that advisory tools often become *de facto*

authorities. Airline pilots increasingly rely upon automated systems. Doctors frequently consult diagnostic software. Financial analysts trust predictive models. Over time, challenging the machine becomes psychologically harder than following it.

Eventually the recommendation ceases to feel optional. The judge remains officially responsible while the algorithm quietly acquires practical influence without democratic accountability. There is also the uncomfortable question of ownership. Increasingly, sophisticated AI systems are developed by private companies whose commercial interests do not necessarily align with public justice. Should proprietary software become part of judicial decision-making, societies may discover that some of the reasoning behind legal outcomes belongs not to the public but to shareholders. The courtroom, historically one of the most transparent institutions in democratic life, risks becoming partially dependent upon corporate black boxes protected by intellectual property law.

That possibility should concern citizens regardless of political persuasion. Justice cannot function entirely behind a licence agreement. Yet rejecting artificial intelligence altogether would be equally misguided. Used carefully, AI can expose inconsistencies, organise enormous volumes of evidence, identify overlooked precedents and reduce administrative delays that deny timely justice. Few defendants benefit from waiting years for their day in court simply because paperwork overwhelms the system. Technology can become an indispensable assistant without pretending to become a wise judge.

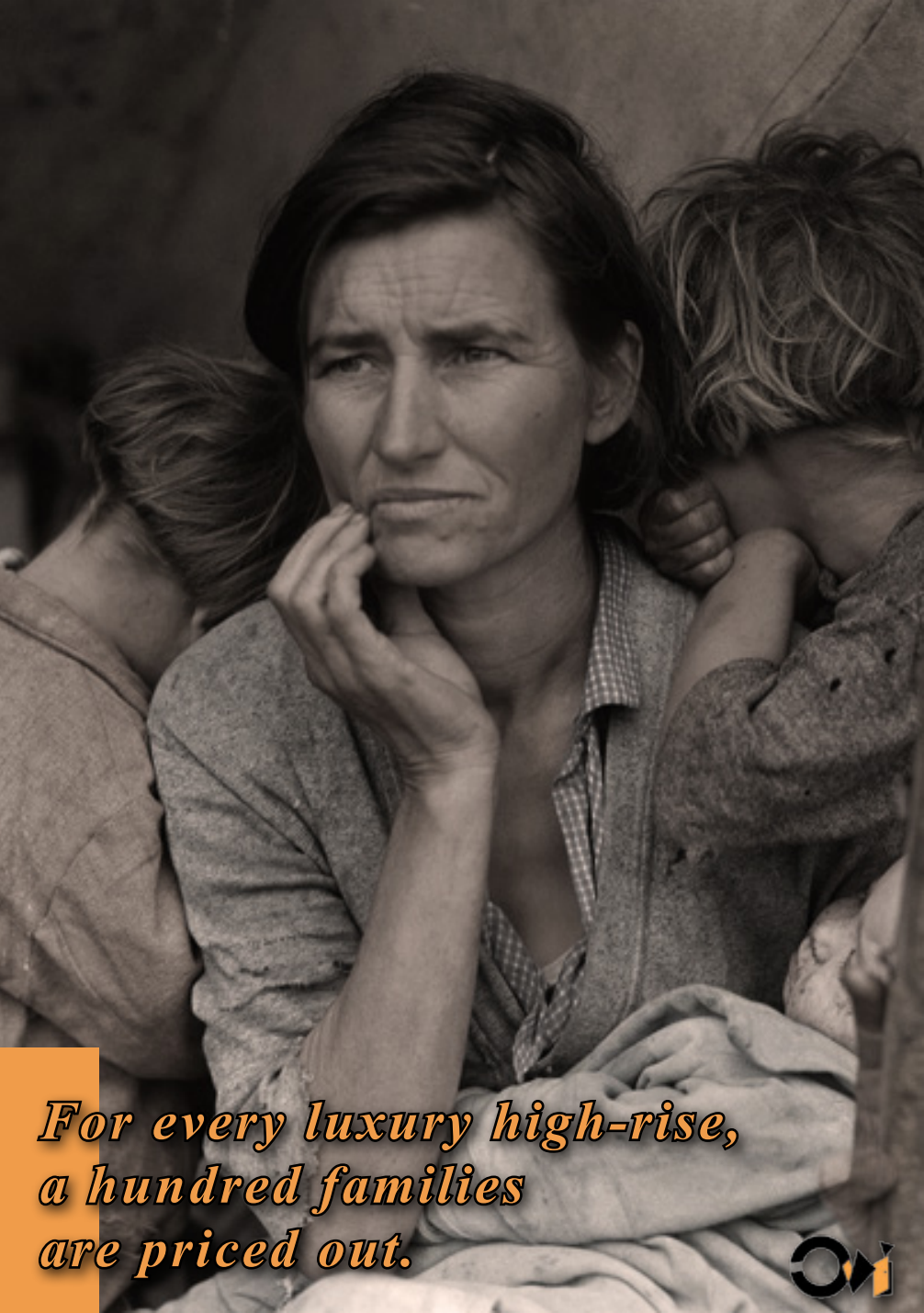
The distinction matters enormously. Artificial intelligence should illuminate decisions, not make them. The law is filled with concepts that resist mathematical optimisation: compassion, re-

morse, proportionality, rehabilitation and dignity. These are not software variables waiting to be fine-tuned. They emerge from culture, philosophy and lived experience. Two defendants may commit identical crimes under radically different circumstances. Justice requires understanding those differences, not merely measuring statistical similarities.

That is where humanity still possesses an advantage over silicon. The greatest threat posed by artificial intelligence to justice is therefore not technological but philosophical. We are slowly redefining fairness as computational consistency. We are beginning to confuse efficiency with legitimacy. We risk believing that because a decision is generated by sophisticated software, it must somehow be more objective than one reached by careful human deliberation.

Courts were never designed to produce perfect answers. They exist to produce accountable ones. Artificial intelligence may one day become an extraordinary servant of justice. It must never become its master. The moment society begins surrendering moral responsibility to algorithms, the courtroom ceases to be a place where citizens judge citizens and becomes something colder: a place where statistical confidence quietly replaces human conscience, one perfectly optimised decision at a time. ■





*For every luxury high-rise,
a hundred families
are priced out.*



JOB PRINTING

thoughts/articles



Ashes for sale



MELINA BARNETT

In Greece, the summer fire season has acquired the grim familiarity of a national ritual. The smoke rises today, the television cameras arrive, politicians put on solemn faces, helicopters circle and the country waits for the next catastrophe. Then, eventually, the flames disappear. What remains is the more interesting question, why do some places seem condemned to burn again and again?

There is, of course, a perfectly reasonable explanation. Greece is hot, dry and increasingly vulnerable to extreme weather. Neglected forests, combustible vegetation, high winds, inadequate prevention and an overheated climate create conditions in which a single spark can become a catastrophe. Arson exists, too, sometimes for criminal profit. But when the same landscapes repeatedly become infernos, it is difficult not to wonder whether Greece's problem is merely fire or what happens after it.

The suspicion becomes corrosive when burnt land later acquires a new economic life. Yesterday there was

blackened woodland; tomorrow there is a villa with an infinity pool, a boutique hotel, a road, a development proposal or a forest of wind turbines. Each individual project may be perfectly legal. That is precisely why the pattern deserves scrutiny rather than conspiracy slogans. The issue is not whether every fire is deliberately started. The issue is whether a system has been designed, deliberately or accidentally, in which destruction makes development easier.

A functioning state should make the opposite calculation. Burning a forest ought to make the land less attractive for opportunistic development, not transform it into a speculative blank canvas. If regulations are strong on paper but porous in practice, the law becomes an invitation to wait. If ownership records are ambiguous, planning rules negotiable and enforcement chronically exhausted, fire can become the first stage of a bureaucratic metamorphosis: forest becomes wasteland, wasteland becomes “special case,” and the special case eventually becomes somebody’s lucrative project.

This is where governmental incompetence begins to resemble something more sinister, not because incompetence proves criminal intent, but because prolonged incompetence can create the same outcome as corruption. A government that cannot prevent repeated destruction, cannot investigate suspicious fires convincingly and cannot guarantee that burned land will remain protected leaves citizens with an unpleasant conclusion: perhaps nobody needs to conspire when the system already rewards the result.

And the windmills complicate the morality further. Greece needs renewable energy. Climate change makes that imperative. Yet green infrastructure is not automatically virtuous merely because its turbines turn in the wind. If renewable projects appear

on landscapes whose ecological value was conveniently diminished by fire, the public has every right to demand an exceptionally transparent chain of decisions.

The answer is not to accuse every firefighter, farmer, developer or energy company of conspiracy. It is to remove the fertile soil in which such suspicions grow. Burned forests should receive stronger protection, ownership and planning decisions should be publicly traceable, investigations should be genuinely independent, and anyone profiting from land transformed by fire should face scrutiny proportional to the public interest.

Greece does not need another summer of patriotic speeches beside smoking ruins. It needs the harder thing, a state capable of proving that ashes are not the beginning of a property transaction.

Because when the forest burns, the first question should be who started the fire. The second should be who benefits from the ashes. ■



Futile walls



THANOS KALAMIDAS

Ceuta has offered Europe an uncomfortable spectacle, people are willing to swim around fences, patrols and barriers to reach a continent whose governments insist that its borders are becoming ever harder to penetrate. The lesson should be obvious, yet politics has an extraordinary talent for ignoring things. Build a higher wall, deploy more patrols, add more drones, detain more people and then act surprised when the pressure appears somewhere else.

The recent surge towards Ceuta is not an argument for abandoning borders. States have borders for good reasons, and governments have a duty to manage who enters. But there is a difference between controlling migration and pretending that migration can be defeated by increasingly theatrical displays of force. A person who believes that Europe offers a better future will not necessarily abandon that belief because another metre of fencing has been added.

This is where the politics of walls becomes intellectually lazy. The wall is visible; the reasons people want to cross it are not. A government can photograph a fence. It cannot photograph a failed economy, a corrupt institu-

tion, a drought-stricken farm, a collapsing public service or a young person's conviction that his future has been stolen before adulthood begins.

Europe's migration debate has therefore become a contest between symptoms and causes.

The symptom is an arriving migrant. The causes are often poverty, weak institutions, insecurity, demographic pressure, climate stress and the enormous difference in opportunity between neighbouring regions. None of these can be solved by ICE-style enforcement imported from America's punitive border politics. Patrols can manage a situation. They cannot manufacture prosperity on the other side of the frontier.



The uncomfortable solution is development and development is expensive. Europe and other rich economies would have to invest far more heavily in poorer countries, not merely to build projects that look good in press releases, but to strengthen schools, hospitals, infrastructure, accountable government, local businesses, energy systems and functioning institutions. The objective should be simple: make staying home a credible economic choice.

Yet this solution has a political sting. Genuine development threatens some of the arrangements from which wealthy societies and corporations benefit. Cheap labour, unequal supply chains, tax competition, resource extraction and concentrated owner-

ship did not emerge from nowhere. Globalisation has produced wealth, but it has distributed bargaining power rather less generously.

That is why the migration argument ultimately becomes an argument about money. If rich countries want fewer desperate people arriving at their gates, they must be prepared to accept lower margins, greater transfers of capital and more competition from economies that are poor. The super-rich cannot demand a fortress around their prosperity while insisting that the rest of the world remain an inexpensive supplier of labour and resources.

There is no sentimental shortcut here. Development requires governance, trade, education, investment and time. It also requires poorer countries to reform themselves and richer ones to stop treating aid as charity while protecting economic privileges at every turn.

Europe can build walls. It can build higher walls still. But if the world beyond them remains unequal, unstable and economically hopeless, people will keep looking for ways through, around or over them.

The border policy is not a wall. It is a world in which fewer people feel compelled to risk all to cross one. ■



The newsroom in someone's spare room



SIDNEY SHELTON

There was a time when a town could be held together, by the newspaper that arrived each morning. It told readers who had been elected, which factory was closing, why the council was paving the wrong road and, occasionally, who had been arrested after an argument involving a gnome. The local paper was not merely a business. It was a civic habit.

That habit is disappearing. As newspapers close bureaux, shrink staffs and turn reporters into remote content machines, local investigative journalism is being rebuilt by people with microphones, newsletters and an alarming willingness to read council minutes. The newsroom may be a kitchen table. The editor may be one person. The budget may consist of subscriptions, coffee and stubbornness.

This is both encouraging and slightly terrifying. Independent Substack writers and podcasters have discovered something corporate media spent years forgetting: local news does not require enormous machinery. It requires curiosity, persistence and somebody willing to ask why the deputy mayor's brother keeps winning municipal contracts.

The best of these operations are unglamorous. They attend planning meetings. They cultivate sources. They file freedom-of-information requests. They compare budgets, read procurement documents and notice that the consultancy has somehow lasted seven years. They publish what larger organisations once considered too small to matter.

But smallness is not automatically virtue. A solitary publisher can become a solitary sovereign, answerable mainly to subscribers who already agree with him. The danger is not only misinformation; it is the seduction of certainty. A reporter without editors can mistake instinct for evidence, suspicion for investigation and a lively newsletter for journalism.

That is why the independent ecosystem needs something older than the internet: standards. The irony is delicious. Digital journalism is rediscovering the virtues of the old local press while abandoning its institutional weaknesses. A good independent reporter can move faster than a newspaper, listen more closely and develop a personal relationship with readers. But the ones also need corrections, transparent sourcing, legal caution and enough humility to publish the sentence every journalist hates: “We got this wrong.”

Podcasts add another advantage. A voice can make a municipal scandal feel immediate in a way that three columns of newsprint rarely managed. Listeners hear hesitation, outrage, humour and the occasional exhausted sigh. The reporter becomes recognisable. That intimacy can build trust—but it can also turn journalism into personality theatre. Nobody should confuse a compelling host with a reliable investigation.

Still, something is happening. Local journalism is becoming less like a factory and more like a neighbourhood workshop. The audience is no longer consuming the product; subscribers can suggest leads, provide documents and challenge conclusions. Done properly, this creates a civic intelligence network.

The old newspaper monopoly was never perfect. It could be complacent, partisan and boring. Yet its decline leaves a hole that social media cannot fill, because Facebook groups are excellent at locating lost cats but less dependable at explaining why the council's housing budget has mysteriously changed.

Independent journalists cannot replace every vanished newsroom. They can, however, make local accountability stubbornly difficult to kill.

Perhaps that is the real promise of the newsletter age: not the return of the newspaper, but the return of the nosy neighbour, with a recorder, a spreadsheet and absolutely no intention of letting the matter drop. ■



Humanity at Crossroads: Where are the Peacemakers



MAHBOOB A. KHAWAJA, PHD.

Global Leaders Who could not Think
as Normal Human Beings

Tyranny is always blind and transitory. Those leaders claiming to be wise and smart wage wars to impose the fallacy of moral degradation and mechanized intellect to propel egoistic glory in phony opinion polls. They want to “destroy civilizations” and fix time and history with the power of political nuisance unfolding treacherous minds as if the destiny of some ethnically chosen people for greatness.

American leaders funded by the Israeli lobby entrap the thinking and political action process across US governance. PM Netanyahu survives supported by American intransigence for Greater Israel. A favorite perversion of facts from fantasy dictates the Arab Gulf leaders’ petrodollar triviality of fake prosperity of degeneration and dismantlement. Disconnected Arab leaders cannot claim security or peace from the US Board of Peace. Deafening silence on peace in Gaza, occupied West Bank daily displacements and planned killings by Israeli forces perpetuate disintegration of Palestine and oblite-

rated experience actualizes the extended world of tragedies and misfortune for global humanity. Pursuant to their strategic agenda against the Arab states, America and Israel announced integration of military establishments. The same insanity flourishes in war between Russia and Ukraine. This state of affairs reflects complete societal breakdown and march towards self-annihilation. Despite hollow claims, no moral and ethical behavior is seen in the sudden and inexplicable plunge to human wickedness. Even the warmongers cannot predict what the end game is going to be. Evil happens when conscientious men do nothing. God created the Heavens and Earth as a trust to live and to flourish human generations since time immemorial. It was not meant to be bombed and destroyed by sheer ignorance and wickedness.

The UNO and world Order is broken and left to the interpretation of few so called democratically elected leaders acting as tyrants and oppressors to overwhelm peace, security and the future of mankind. Why the UNO based on its Charter cannot protect the civilian population in Gaza and West Bank from the Israeli forces? They favor the Hobbesian formula: “war of all against all.” People of knowledge know well what is truth and what is falsehood. Our professed ignorance and arrogance towards Divine Knowledge has pushed us to echo evil and futility in a global cataclysm – the treacherous conflict causing degeneration to be at the epicenter of man-made cataclysm driven by lingering suspicion in relations to others within the splendid Universe. The earth and universe are meant for human beings and are enriched to support all of their needs over time and space. Are we living in a disconnected world of our own making? How strange we are so abhorrent and neglectful of our own present and futuristic sustainability? Truth is One and the same unchanging as it was many centuries earlier. We are a creation of God, One humanity

and cannot detach ourselves to what happens to other fellow human beings.

The Earth is Living and We, the Humanity have Passion for Peace, Not Wars

We live on earth that sustains all forms of living things, yet human ignorance and arrogance are at work to destroy the essential foundation of our own lives. The creation of Earth, Moon, the Sun and all working systems are a trust to humanity. Have We, the People, We, the Humanity honored and protected that natural trust and its obligations? In a recent article (“Conflict Beyond Reason: a dialogue to end the war is desperately needed”) <https://www.uncommonthought.com>: this author encompassed the truth not for geological or meteorological explanation but for the understanding of fellow human beings that the earth spins at 1670 km per hour and orbit the Sun at 107,000 km per hour. Imagine, if this spinning fails, what consequences could occur to the living beings on Earth. Think again, about the average distance of earth from moon is 93 million miles -the distance of Moon from Earth is currently 384,821 km equivalent to 0.002572 Astronomical Units –(<https://www.newscientist.com/question/fastearthspin/#ixzz7C8p37S9X>). If this God given system of distance between the Earth-Sun and the Earth-Moon were ever to change, there will be no sign of life, human civilizations or habitats left on Earth. Do intelligent leaders listen to voices of reason and make a navigational change for peace and harmony when facts of life warrant an urgent change in attitudes, policies and behaviors? The Divine Revelations (the Quran: 40: 21) offer a stern warning to conscientious leaders and nations:

Do they not travel through the earth and see

What was the End of those before them. They were even superior to them in strength

And in the traces they have left on the earth. But God did call them to account for their sins

And none had they to defend them against God.

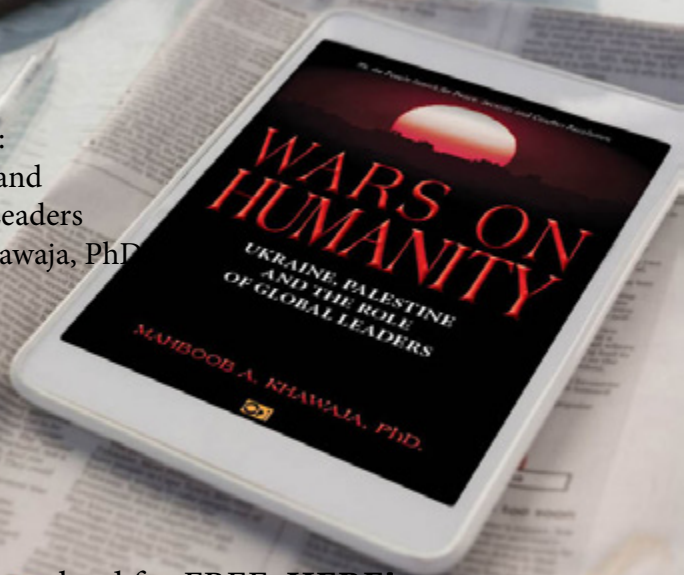
The Wars in Palestine, Ukraine and against Iran Must be Stopped by Reason and Dialogue

To safeguard our common future as One humanity, we the people must reject ignorance, cruelty and wars as means to political power and hegemony. Civilizations do not grow out of the moral mire of conquests, superiority of racial ethnicity, tyranny and imperialism. Are there any Thinking people to take heed from the prevalent facts of human history? President Trump appears to echo the extremist policies and practices pursued by PM Netanyahu as if the rest of the conscientious global community does not exist. The former European imperialists sucked out the oil resources from the Arab world and now intend on dismantling the Arab-Muslim world- narrates Dr. Jan Oberg, a peace researcher from Sweden, and former British Diplomat Ian Proud: “The “West” Is Imploding Faster after This” TRANSCEND Media Service: 4/8/25: <https://www.transcend.org/tms/2025/04/the-west-is-imploding-faster-after-this/> The signs are not just on the wall but written in the skies and the oceans too. The entire “western” narrative, its repressive dominance, and its hubris are about to collapse and take many of its established institutions down with it. And the kakistocratic (aka imbecile) leadership doesn’t even realize it. If they did, they wouldn’t be driving Europe into that giant iceberg.

Watching dreadful apparatus of fire and brimstone, We, the People are horrified by the crimes against humanity and genocide happening across the globe, be it across Gaza-Palestine, between Russia-Ukraine and Iran and the US war. Time and history will not wait as we the humankind stand at a critical juncture of our own complacency to have allowed ignorance, hatred, fear and animosity to destroy our life, culture and existence. Can we think to be human in all of our moral, political and intellectual endeavors?



Wars on Humanity:
Ukraine, Palestine and
the role of Global Leaders
by Mahboob A. Khawaja, PhD



This book is a must-read for all, regardless of ideology and politics, a vital work about humanity's present and future, and that is what makes it so valuable.

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Generals' murderous arithmetic



MARY LONG

Dictatorships have a peculiar talent for turning human beings into statistics. A village becomes an “area of operation”, a funeral becomes a security incident, a bombed marketplace becomes collateral damage, and the dead acquire the bureaucratic dignity of a number. Myanmar’s military has perfected this grim arithmetic for years. What is changing now is not the cruelty but its intensity.

The escalation reported since the military’s new chief assumed command is a reminder that authoritarian systems do not become moderate merely because their uniforms are freshly pressed. The generals may reshuffle titles, rearrange offices and manufacture a civilian-looking administration, but the machinery underneath remains the same: fear, artillery, air power and the conviction that the population exists to obey.

There is something almost grotesque about the timing. As neighbouring governments increase diplomatic engagement, Myanmar’s military appears to be increasing the pressure on the people it claims to govern. This is the oldest trick in the authoritarian manual: conduct diplomacy abroad while conducting war at home. For-

eign ministers receive polished explanations about stability and sovereignty while civilians receive the less polished version, shelling, displacement and terror.

The international community often finds itself strangely susceptible to this performance. A new leader arrives, a new political arrangement is announced, and diplomats suddenly discover vocabulary such as “opening”, “transition” and “engagement”. The language is comforting. It suggests that history has turned a corner. But history does not turn corners simply because generals change desks.

Myanmar’s tragedy is that the military has repeatedly demonstrated an almost pathological inability to understand legitimacy. It can occupy towns, imprison opponents and terrorise communities. What it cannot manufacture is consent. Every attack on civilians therefore achieves the opposite of what military rulers presumably desire. It deepens hatred, enlarges resistance and makes reconciliation harder.

And yet the generals continue. That is partly because repression can become a self-feeding system. Once an army has defined dissent as treason, every act of resistance becomes proof that still more repression is necessary. The government creates the rebellion it invokes to justify its violence, then cites the rebellion as evidence that its violence was justified. It is a political snake eating its own country.

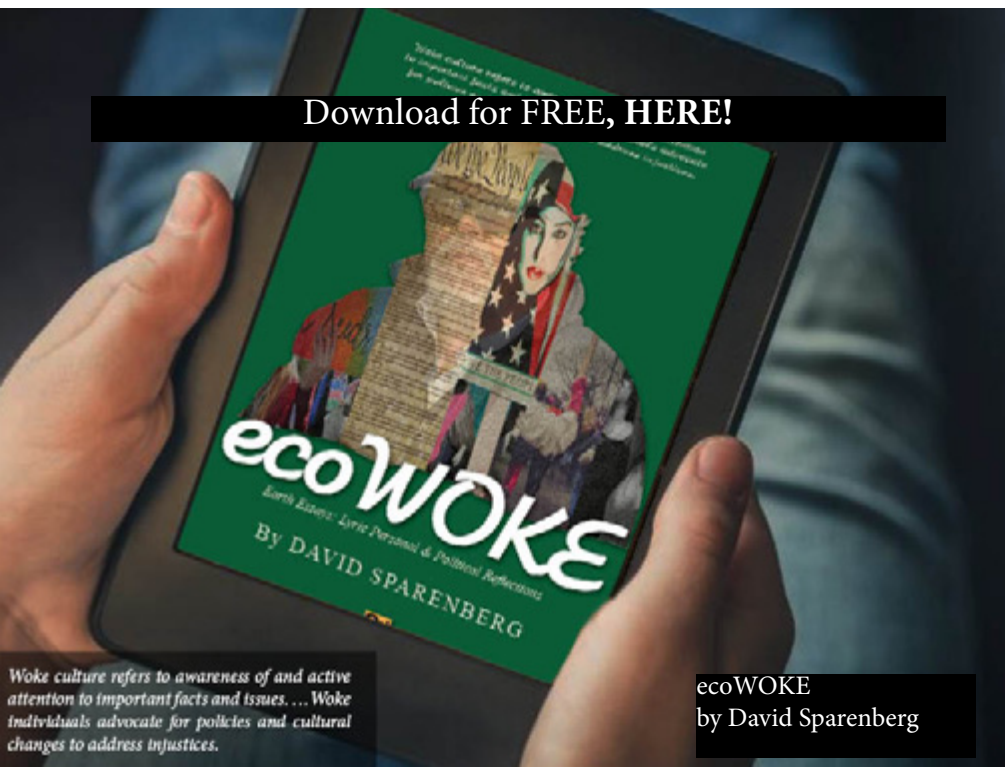
The civilians caught inside this circular logic have no such luxury. They cannot retreat into abstractions about national security. They bury relatives. They abandon farms. They sleep in forests and improvised shelters. Children learn the sound of aircraft before they learn the geography of their own country.

Diplomacy remains necessary, but diplomacy without pressure can become theatre. Myanmar does not need another procession of solemn statements followed by polite handshakes. It needs sustained international insistence that civilian suffering is not an unfortunate side effect of governance. It is evidence of governance gone monstrously wrong.

The military may change its chief, its slogans or its constitutional costume. But until it abandons the belief that Myanmar can be ruled through terror, nothing fundamental has changed. A dictatorship can rename itself. It cannot rename the dead. ■



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Woke culture refers to awareness of and active attention to important facts and issues. ... Woke individuals advocate for policies and cultural changes to address injustices.

ecoWOKE
by David Sparenberg

The human cargo



SHANNA SHEPARD

Every year, World Day against Trafficking in Persons arrives with us condemning trafficking, hold conferences about trafficking, publish photographs of rescued victims and then return to the more comfortable business of pretending that migration exists independently of the economies built around human desperation at considerable profit.

It does not. Traffickers flourish where borders are difficult to cross legally, where asylum systems are painfully slow, where legitimate work is inaccessible to newcomers and where governments confuse deterrence with policy. The migrant who cannot obtain a visa does not thereby stop needing food, shelter, employment or safety. Instead, the market moves underground. And underground markets are precisely where traffickers become entrepreneurs.

This is the part of the conversation that respectable politics often prefers to leave in the basement. The immigrant is frequently described as a problem to be managed: a number, a boat, a queue, a border crossing, an electoral statistic. Trafficking begins when that abstraction acquires a price tag. A smuggler offers passage. An intermediary offers employment. A landlord offers a

room at an impossible rent. A criminal network offers protection. Soon the debt has become bondage, the job has become captivity and the journey has become an invoice that can never quite be paid.

The cruel joke is that the harder governments make lawful migration without creating realistic alternatives, the more valuable the trafficker's services become. A border wall can be photographed. A deportation flight can be announced. A minister can declare that the system is under control. None of these things necessarily dismantles the economic machinery that makes a desperate person exploitable.

Nor should immigrants be romanticised. They are not saints wandering through a hostile world, any more than they are the invading hordes of political caricature. They are people. That banal observation is apparently still revolutionary enough to require repetition.

Trafficking also thrives on the demand side. The cheap food picked in fields, the cheap clothes sewn in factories, the cheap construction labour hidden behind gleaming developments and the domestic work performed behind respectable front doors can all conceal a question that consumers dislike asking: who paid the real price?

There is a tendency to imagine traffickers as cinematic villains operating in distant shadows. Some are precisely that. But exploitation can be startlingly ordinary. It can involve a subcontractor, a recruiter, a dishonest employer or a landlord who understands perfectly well that a frightened undocumented worker will complain to nobody.

The answer cannot simply be tougher policing, though policing matters. It requires legal routes for migration, faster and fairer asylum procedures, serious labour inspections, protection for whistleblowers, cooperation across borders and, above all, a willingness to prosecute those who profit from vulnerability rather than merely those who happen to transport it.

World Day against Trafficking in Persons should therefore be less a day for pity than a day for uncomfortable arithmetic. Every time a society creates a population that must live outside the law, somebody will discover how to monetise that exclusion.

The trafficker is not an aberration at the edge of the migration system. He is what happens when human need meets political denial. And denial, unlike migration, has never needed a passport.



Door to Thoughts
Ovi to Philosophy
Door to Journalism
Ovi to Politics
Door to Poetry
Ovi to Opinion
Door to History
Ovi to the Heart
Door to Unknown
Ovi to Wonder
Door to Imagination
Ovi to Tomorrow
Door to Science
Ovi to the Past
Door to Solitude
Ovi to Mystery
Door to Peace
Ovi to Nostalgia
Door to Music
Ovi to Art
Door to Dance
Ovi to Infinity
Door to the Void
Ovi to the Soul
Door to Courage
Ovi to Grief
Door to Joy
Ovi to Understanding
Door to the Truth
Ovi to a Dream
Door to Adventure
Ovi to Midnight
Door to Starlight
Ovi to Hope
Door to Shadows
Ovi to Whispers
Door to Labyrinth
Ovi to Lost
Door to Lost Found
Ovi to Elsewhere
Ovi to Cinema
Door to Theatre
Ovi to Education



OVI MEANS “DOOR” IN FINNISH.

The footpath that still knows the way



THE ROUTE OF TRUCE

There are grand projects that promise to change the world with steel, glass and spectacle. Then there are footpaths. One builds monuments to ambition; the other quietly restores memory. The proposed Route of Truce connecting Ancient Ilida with Ancient Olympia belongs firmly to the second category, and that may be precisely why it matters.

In an age obsessed with speed, efficiency and instant gratification, a fifty-kilometre walk sounds almost rebellious. It asks us to slow down. To notice. To remember that before roads became highways and journeys became little more than coordinates on a navigation screen, movement itself carried meaning. Every step was an encounter with landscape, neighbours and shared history.

The ancient Olympic Games were never merely an athletic competition. Their greatest innovation was arguably political and profoundly human. The Sacred Truce recognised something that modern civilisation still struggles to accept: peace is not simply the absence of conflict but a deliberate act of collective restraint. Enemies laid down their weapons not because differences



disappeared, but because something greater demanded respect. Athletes, pilgrims, merchants and ordinary travellers could move safely towards Olympia because an entire culture agreed that there were moments when humanity mattered more than hostility.

That lesson feels almost painfully contemporary.

The Route of Truce is therefore not valuable because archaeologists may one day prove every metre corresponds exactly to an ancient mountain path. Historical precision, while desirable, is not the point. History itself is rarely a perfectly preserved road. More often it survives as fragments, echoes and educated reconstructions. What matters is the willingness to reconnect with the spirit that once animated the journey.

The route links Ancient Ilida, the city responsible for organising the Olympic Games, with Ancient Olympia, where the contests became sacred ritual. Between them lie villages that have experienced hardship, economic decline and, in many cases, devastating wildfires that scarred both forests and communities. Their

inclusion transforms the project from an archaeological curiosity into something living. It reminds visitors that history does not exist behind museum glass. It breathes in villages, olive groves, vineyards, pomegranate orchards and mountain trails where people continue to cultivate the same landscape that nurtured Greek civilisation thousands of years ago.

Modern tourism too often mistakes consumption for discovery. Visitors rush through destinations, photographing monuments before boarding buses to the next attraction. The Route of Truce offers an alternative philosophy. Walking requires patience. It forces travellers to earn the landscape rather than merely observe it through a window. Every village becomes part of the story instead of an inconvenient detour. Every conversation with a local producer becomes as valuable as another photograph of ancient stones.

That change in perspective may be the route's greatest achievement.

Economic development built upon ecological tourism carries another quiet wisdom. Instead of overwhelming fragile communities with mass tourism, it encourages sustainable encounters. Local olive oil, wine, aromatic herbs and agricultural traditions cease being souvenirs and become expressions of identity. Visitors are no longer passive consumers but temporary participants in the rhythm of rural life. Development rooted in heritage has a far better chance of surviving than development imposed from outside.

Yet the deeper significance extends beyond Greece.

The ideals born around Olympia have become global symbols, even if the modern Olympic movement sometimes struggles to

embody them. Commercial interests, political controversies and international rivalries often overshadow the principles that inspired the Games in the first place. A physical Route of Truce reminds us that peace cannot survive as a ceremonial slogan repeated every four years. It must be practised continuously, step after deliberate step.

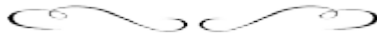
Freedom of speech, democratic participation, equality before the law and mutual respect are not abstract declarations engraved on marble. They are habits cultivated within communities willing to listen to one another despite disagreement. The ancient Greeks understood that civic life depended upon dialogue no less than competition. They celebrated excellence without abandoning the shared rules that made excellence meaningful.

Perhaps that is why this mountain path deserves attention beyond its geographical boundaries. It asks a deceptively simple question of every generation: can we still walk together towards something sacred without first demanding that everyone become identical?

If the answer remains yes, then the Route of Truce is far more than a hiking trail. It becomes an invitation to rediscover that civilisation itself is built not only by those who conquer distances, but by those who choose to cross them in peace. ■



One year of contribution, inspiration and excellence



GAFG

Celebrating one year of
Global Academy for Future Governance (GAFG)

Governance has acquired a curious habit; it talks incessantly about the future while preparing remarkably badly for it. Governments issue strategies, companies publish transformation plans, universities produce forecasts and consultants manufacture acronyms at an industrial scale. Yet the machinery for deciding what matters, what can wait and what may become disastrously expensive remains surprisingly weak.

That is where the Global Academy for Future Governance (GAFG) makes a persuasive proposition. Its central idea, that better governance depends on improving methods, means and mindsets (the ‘3Ms’), sounds almost disarmingly simple. Its importance lies precisely there. Modern problems are rarely caused by a shortage of information; they are caused by institutions that cannot connect information to judgement.

GAFG’s first virtue is its refusal to respect the fashionable boundaries between disciplines. Climate change is not merely an environmental question; artificial intelli-

gence is not merely a technology question; migration is not merely a border question; and development is not merely an economic one. Each is an unruly mixture of economics, politics, science, ethics, security and human behaviour. Policymakers who insist on putting such problems into tidy boxes are not being rigorous, they are being convenient.

GAFG's five-dimensional view – land, sea, airspace, near outer space and cyberspace – is similarly useful. The modern world does not operate in compartments. A satellite disruption can affect a port; a cyberattack can interrupt electricity; a drought can alter food prices, migration and political stability thousands of kilometres away. The serious task of governance is therefore less about predicting isolated events than understanding connections.

There is also something refreshing in GAFG's scepticism about technological hype. The world does not need another institution shouting that every new algorithm will revolutionise everything. Markets are perfectly capable of doing that without assistance. What decision-makers need today is someone prepared to ask the unfashionable questions: Does this technology solve a real problem? Who pays for its unintended consequences? What happens to workers, institutions, ecosystems and public trust? And who benefits when the promised revolution turns out to be mostly a press release?

That emphasis matters especially in the Global South. Development cannot sensibly be measured by the number of digital platforms deployed, data centres constructed or glossy innovation districts opened. Economic progress that leaves societies more unequal, ecosystems more damaged or institutions less capable is not progress with a footnote, it is progress on credit.

GAFG's claim that it is a partner rather than an expenditure is therefore more than positioning. Good foresight is cheap compared with bad decisions. A government that avoids one failed programme, a company that detects one strategic risk early, or an institution that prevents one costly ethical or environmental mistake – before the bill for unintended consequences eventually arrives – may recover its investment many times over.

The real test, however, will be whether GAFG can remain as independent in practice as it is ambitious in principle. Neutrality is valuable only when it survives pressure from clients, politics, fashionable technologies and commercial interests.

After one year, the strongest case for the Global Academy for Future Governance is not that it possesses a crystal ball, but that it recognises the future's most dangerous feature: everything is connected. Better methods, adequate means and wiser mindsets may not guarantee excellent governance, but without them, excellence is mostly branding and the future is too expensive to leave to slogans. ■





#savethechildren



Manish Zodiac Predictions for August 2026



MANISH KUMAR ARORA

Aries (21 March – 19 April) – It is definitely your time to shine. You will put your energy behind some idea you've put into motion. You could be letting go of demanding partnerships or changing the way you respond. Either way, this confidence has you grinning from ear to ear. Your communications increase as you reevaluate a budget or financial plan. An adjustment at work could mean letting go of managing too many projects. Creative partners will be ready to assist you with both input and backing. Delegation is key to streamlining multiple tasks and achieving your highest aspirations. Take time to enjoy your family or get some much needed down time to eliminate stress. Favorable Dates : Aug2, 7, 11, 16, 20 & 25. Favorable Colors: Blue & White

Taurus (20 April – 20 May) – There is a feeling of settling down and establishing routines that support the demands on your energy. Special attention to diet and exercise will help you beat stress. Old connections re-surface to reflect values and ideas that may be outworn or all grown-up. In later part of the month, you could be finding your courage to step into unfamiliar territory. Friends both old and new appear to rekindle bonds. A much needed vacation is on the agenda so soak up the rest and relaxation. Synchronicity plays a big role this

month, and connections can turn into beneficial helpers. You could be investing in a new home, big investment or preparing yourself for changes which are just around the corner. Favorable Dates : Aug 2, 9, 11, 18, 20 & 27. Favorable Colors: Blue & Yellow

Gemini (21 May – 20 June) – This month is full of change and challenge. Networking will put you in touch with decision makers and help you make critical and fruitful changes in your career. Delegate when possible and make way for a big transition on the job. This is your month to embrace higher education or reach for a new goal. Maybe something you've been interested in resurfaces from the past. Long distance trips aligned with the holidays will connect you with people of like-mind while challenges with authority figures. You're at a point where partnering with other people can be very beneficial, and interacting with them can move you and your ideas forward. Favorable Dates : Aug 1, 2, 10, 11, 19 & 20. Favorable Colors: Red & Yellow

Cancer (21 June – 22 July) – You are wrapping up a very long period of change. Demands on the work-front and from partners challenge your sense of security or self-worth. Do some research to come up with new ideas or goals. Connections you develop now set the stage for future opportunities. Unexpected changes will lead you to new friends or business partners. With the recent flurry of activity in your career it seems like there is barely time to relax. Invest both your time and money wisely when pursuing pleasure. Taking additional time to enjoy rest and relaxation will do wonders for your mental outlook. Favorable Dates: Aug 5, 7, 14, 16, 22 & 25. Favorable Colors : Red & Black

Leo (23 July – 22 August) – Attention to detail is key to overcoming a challenging project. Using your creativity and natural charm will allow you to make connections that further both your dreams and wishes. Goals you set in motion may need to

be reworked after mid-month. As always, slow and steady wins the race. Writing and creativity will direct your energy in a positive direction. Your values are scrutinized as financial changes cause you to revisit the details of an agreement. Partnerships can be demanding, and finding your voice or standing your ground is mandatory for self-preservation. Opportunities to reconnect with friends and family will have you buzzing from place to place. Favorable Dates : Aug 1, 4, 10, 13, 19 & 22. Favorable Colors: Yellow & White

Virgo (23 August – 22 September) – Flexibility is going to be your best friend this month. Friends and family clamor for your attention. Demands at work will place you squarely in charge, and abrupt changes require you to think on your feet. Dynamic connections will awaken your gypsy spirit. The details of work projects will demand focus and charm. The intensity of your interactions has shifted and innovation and planning ahead will help you manage a hectic organizational pace. Opportunity to pick up where you left off is presented in a relationship. It's time to push your own agenda, in more ways than one. A breakthrough is eminent. Favorable Dates: Aug 1, 3, 10, 12, 19 & 21. Favorable Colors : White & Green

Libra (23 September – 22 October) – You've been experiencing a kind of inner renovation. Opportunities in your career are beginning to present themselves. Connecting with likeminded friends will inspire your entrepreneurial spirit. New partnerships expand your idea of possibility this month. Innovation is on your side as you organize and prioritize a schedule. Dream big. You'll emerge with a mysterious glow and new-found confidence. Your newfound sense of purpose and power will also help you find creative and effective ways to solve longstanding as well as new problems. You could be contemplating a move or changes in your

home. Favorable Dates :Aug 4, 8, 13, 17, 22 & 26. Favorable Colors : Red & Blue

Scorpio (23October – 21 November)– This is an excellent time to make decisions about your financial affairs, as your judgement is sound and reliable, though a bit conservative. Investing in beautiful things which are likely to increase in value over time (such as jewellery or fine art) is favored. Others are willing to help and cooperate with your aims. Your interest in the arts or in promoting harmony and good will between people is brought out at this time. Cultivating a sense of honest pride in your achievements and true gratitude for your blessings can do wonders to raise your self-esteem and further perpetuate your own circle of success.Favorable Dates :Aug 6, 8, 15, 17, 24 & 26. Favorable Colors : Yellow & Purple

Sagittarius (22 November – 21 December) – You are feeling warm, expressive, and lively. Loving feelings flow between you and the people you meet, especially those of the opposite sex. Romance and flirtations are likely now. Friendships are also strengthened at this time. Also, your creativity and desire to make something beautiful is stimulated now. You become less ego-centered and more sensitive to the needs of others. Consequently, you behave in a more mature manner. This is a good time to brainstorm with others, share ideas, and come to a group consensus. You can be sure you're in the right place at the right time, talking to all the right people – and they like what they are hearing. Favorable Dates :Aug 2, 3, 11, 12, 20 & 21. Favorable Colors : Red & Black

Capricorn (22 December – 19 January) – You can move forward with creative projects and express yourself more easily and comfortably now.You are likely to come up with a clever solution or a very workable plan, especially if you brainstorm with others.

You also tend to make up your mind very quickly and decisively now, and to translate your ideas into action. Relationships deepen and grow, and penetrate to a very personal level. This process is sometimes initiated by you and sometimes initiated by the other person, but in either case it leads to a much deeper understanding and bond between both of you. Favorable Dates : Aug 3, 7, 12, 16, 21 & 25. Favorable Colors : White & Blue

Aquarius (20 January – 18 February) – Your popularity, optimism and happiness rise. This is a great period, many puzzles will be solved, you'll see the world in a more gentle and wise light and you could easily fall deeply and profoundly in love. Yes, you could wed, also. Your romantic possibilities tend to arise from social gatherings, clubs, organizations, etc. You're ambitious, too, but bosses are impatient, testy, so exercise diplomacy. Filled with new vitality, you are feeling powerfully creative impulses that refuse to be ignored. You might experience a dilemma between an attraction and your ethics. Lucky romantic, creative and learning passions will be built. Favorable Dates : Aug 3, 6, 12, 15, 21 & 27. Favorable Colors : Green & White

Pisces (19 February – 20 March) – It is a great time to explore options of expansion and promotion. Work will require unexpected travel that will also come with prestige and increased revenue. You need to hold on to your money and it is a time of saving. Your energy, charisma and effectiveness continue high and strong. Working energetically with a clear objective in mind, advancing your own professional goals and enlisting others' support for your projects by acting as a leader, are key issues now. Use this great time to make new friends and join new groups, clubs, organizations, etc. You could fall in love and also attract admiring glances. Favorable Dates : Aug 2, 3, 11, 12, 20 & 21. Favorable Colors : White & Blue



Keep nature a current reality,
not in a **future** childhood fishbowl!

poetry/fiction



ARMAGEDDON



DAVID SPARENBERG

*“A whole civilization will die tonight.”
President Donald J. Trump **

The howling of hatred
And the madness of contagious war
Spreads over the earth.
In heaven
The wrath of God panics.
The Hour of Armageddon.

May a meteor
Crash into your privates.
May a volcano erupt
In the crater of your heart.
May the fiery fall of Lucifer
Forever ending in ashes
Land on your face, melting
The jelly of your eyes.

We have become
In our dunce caps of stupidity
Destroyer of world.

A black sun lurks
-a leering death's head metal-
Behind the mushroom
Clouds of war.
The Minute of Armageddon.

**Of course PONTUS was bluffing, the same way Putin bluffed with the threat of nuclear war over Ukraine. But such statements by leaders with access to nuclear arsenals are expressions of the propaganda of global terrorism. It is past due time for Earth to be made a Nuclear Free Zone and the planet rendered free of tyrants and political mass murderers. No more “deals” with business as usual. Earth’s human population needs a new Global Bill of Rights. Better to weave the impossible dream into the fabric of possibilities than to continue planning the nightmare of annihilation. No one in political office should ever again menace the citizens of creation by saying, “A whole civilization will die tonight.” And the joker who spoke those words—one humorless clown in the international circus of nihilism and power—has the nuclear codes in his suit pocket.*



One night when it was late we went to Zoo Lake



ABIGAIL GEORGE

It was very late. After the movie we drove to Zoo Lake in
his older sister's car. The one who worked in a bank. It was
nearly midnight

I would sit and wait and watch the other cars in the dark
I would look at my hands, at the stars. I couldn't see his face.

It was like he was a different person. It was too dark.
Still, I waited. I waited for him to say something, anything.

He didn't take my hand in his. We couldn't afford hamburgers
and to go out and dance and eat so he brought me here.

I had never had a cocktail. I had never drank hard liquor
I had never danced until dawn in a nightclub. I would watch
the cars become like vehicles inhabited by ghosts. I would
just sit and wait. "Why did you bring me here?" I asked

I wanted him to drive me home, and said so. Inside was an
abyss,
but inside I was frightened of what I was being asked to do

I wasn't a mind reader. I couldn't tell what he was thinking
I didn't want to kiss him. I didn't want him to do anything to
me,

and so I just sat and waited. I suppose that made him kind,
not a predator

He said could I wait a minute, could I just hang on. Gimme

a sec. His eyes had to adjust to the dark. He couldn't see in the
dark

I couldn't see anything. The lake was a black sea. I could
only see the cars. Those vehicles that were inhabited by a
ghost

population. Things like this only seemed to happen to me,
not my cousins, not my sister. Did he want me to obey, follow
instructions? Obey, obey, obey instructions. I sat and waited

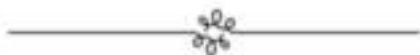
until he started the car, and he drove me home. I am still
very good at waiting, I am still very good at sitting completely
still

until someone listens to me. I never told anyone about this,
about

him, that night, so I wrote this poem instead. He belongs to
my past

and it is a form of insanity, a mental illness, to live in the past.
Sometimes

I think about him and his guitar. I wonder if he ever got mar-
ried.



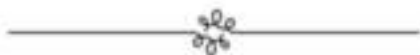
Regrets



NIKOS LAIOS

You have regrets?
I too have regrets,
They're my regrets,
They're proof that
One has lived
Richly and deeply.

Loves and losses,
Passions and victories,
Sins and good deeds,
Errors of moral and
Intellectual judgement,
Destruction and decay,
Redemption and rebirth,
And the hollow days
Of the past that are
Lost in the mist
Of memories,
Our regrets
Make us
Human.



The price of rust



ANYA TIOSA

The wind swept across the plains of the old town like a whisper of a forgotten promise. Dust rose in spirals as the sun sank low behind the cracked ruins of the city's once-bustling district. It was the kind of town where hope had packed its bags long ago, leaving behind hollow streets and broken houses. The kind of place where men used to work long hours in the mills, but now only the silence of abandoned buildings remained.

Harlan Ford knew the town like the back of his hand. He had spent his youth here, dreaming of better days. Now, he was a man broken by time, clinging to memories and a small piece of land left by his father. His son, Kyle, was growing up too fast, as boys do in places like this. But Kyle's eyes, once filled with wonder, had begun to mirror the harshness of their surroundings.

"Pa, you sure this is the right place?" Kyle's voice echoed in the stillness as they stood in front of the old Smith house. The wooden porch was sagging, and the windows were cracked like the brittle bones of some long-dead creature. The once-white siding had turned a sickly gray, weathered by years of neglect.

Harlan looked down at his son, his face hard, the lines of age deepening around his eyes. “We got no choice, Kyle. This town’s as dry as a sun-bleached bone, and we need the copper. Ain’t no one else left to turn to.”

Kyle shifted uncomfortably, his gaze darting toward the horizon as if expecting someone to appear from the dust. He didn’t want to be here. The truth gnawed at him, stripping copper from abandoned houses felt wrong, felt like they were stealing from the ghosts of the past. But what choice did they have? His mother had left when he was younger, leaving only Harlan to raise him. Harlan, stubborn as a mule, never asked for help.

Kyle had been taught right from wrong. His father had instilled that in him, along with the belief that a man should make his own way in the world. But what happens when there’s no world left to claim?

“Come on, son,” Harlan muttered, moving toward the front door. The hinges groaned under the weight of the past as he pushed it open. The smell of dust and decay flooded their senses. It had been years since anyone had lived here, yet the remnants of life lingered, the old rocking chair by the fireplace, the cracked china left carelessly on the table, the scent of a life that once was.

“I don’t like this,” Kyle whispered, glancing over his shoulder. “This place feels like it’s waiting for something.”

Harlan didn’t answer immediately. Instead, he crouched by the rusted pipes near the back wall and began working with a crowbar. “The world doesn’t care about what you like or don’t like, Kyle. It’s just a matter of getting by.” His voice was steady, but there was a weariness there, a heaviness that clung to him like the dust in the air.

Kyle knelt beside him, reluctantly taking the other end of the pipe. His hands trembled as he gripped the metal, the cold weight of it sinking into his bones. He was no stranger to hard work, but there was something about this... this stripping of lives that made him feel smaller than he ever had before.

They worked in silence, the sound of metal scraping against metal filling the emptiness. Minutes turned to hours, and the sun began its slow descent below the horizon. Finally, Harlan stood, wiping his hands on his pants, a grim smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. "That should be enough for tonight," he said, pulling a small flashlight from his jacket pocket. "We'll come back tomorrow for more."

Kyle stood slowly, his gaze still fixed on the house. "Pa, I..."

"Don't start," Harlan interrupted, his tone sharper now. "You don't need to question me. Just do what you're told. We're doing what we have to, boy. No one's going to hand us a damn thing, and that's the hard truth of it."

Kyle swallowed, trying to push down the feeling that was rising in his throat. He wanted to argue, to tell his father that there had to be another way, but the words caught in his mouth, choking on the fear that had become a constant companion.

As they made their way back to the truck, Kyle noticed something, shadows moving across the field. At first, he thought it was just the wind playing tricks on him, but the figures seemed to be closing in on them, moving faster than he could account for.

"Pa," Kyle said, his voice barely a whisper, "we're not alone."

Harlan's eyes narrowed, and he reached for the rifle slung over

his shoulder. “Stay close,” he muttered, his grip tightening on the handle. He had seen too many things in his life to ignore a feeling like this.

They were almost to the truck when a voice called out from the darkness.

“Hold up! You think you can just take what’s ours?”

Harlan froze, his body tensing as he turned to face the speaker. Two men emerged from the shadows, their faces obscured by the brim of their hats, but the aggression in their stance was clear.

Kyle’s heart raced as he looked at his father. Harlan’s grip tightened around the rifle, his jaw set.

“Now, listen here,” Harlan said, his voice cold as steel. “We ain’t got anything to give. This here’s just scrap metal from an abandoned house. You want it, you’re welcome to it. But we’ve got no time to waste on your trouble.”

The men laughed, low and dangerous. “Trouble? Ain’t no trouble at all. You don’t get to take what’s left without paying the price.”

Harlan’s eyes flicked to Kyle, then back to the men. “We ain’t looking for trouble. We’re just trying to survive.”

The taller of the two men took a step forward, his hand twitching near his belt. “Survive? That’s rich. You think you can just take from these old houses, these graves of men who worked this town dry, and not face the consequences?”

Kyle could feel the weight of the words hanging in the air, suffocating. He knew that they weren’t just talking about copper.

They were talking about something deeper, something darker. Something that had been growing in this town for years, fed by greed and desperation.

“We’re just trying to feed ourselves,” Harlan said, his voice low, his eyes calculating.

The shorter man laughed again, and this time it was a sound full of malice. “You know what happens when you take from the wrong hands. And you just took something that ain’t yours.”

Kyle’s stomach churned as the men advanced. He felt trapped, caught between loyalty to his father and the dawning realization that this path, this life, was leading them into a place they couldn’t return from.

Then, without warning, Harlan raised the rifle. “I said stay back.”

The men froze, sensing the shift in power. The taller one hesitated, then glanced at his companion. “You sure about this, old man?”

Harlan’s eyes were cold, distant. “We’re just trying to get by. You’re making this harder than it has to be.”

There was a long silence. Then, slowly, the men stepped back, their eyes burning with quiet fury. “You better remember this, Ford. Nothing goes unnoticed in a place like this.”

As they retreated into the shadows, Harlan lowered the rifle, his shoulders sagging. Kyle’s heart was still pounding, his hands trembling.

“You alright, Pa?” he asked, his voice small.

Harlan didn't look at him. He just climbed into the truck, his voice gruff. “We keep moving, Kyle. We keep moving, and we don't look back.”

But as they drove off into the night, Kyle's gaze lingered on the silhouette of the abandoned houses, and for the first time, he wondered if they could ever truly outrun the cost of their choices.

The rusting town, the copper, the desperation, they were all a part of the same thing. A thing that had been alive long before they came here, and would likely be here long after they were gone.

And Kyle knew, deep down, that the price of rust was never just metal. It was something far harder to face. ■



art



Eero Nelimarkka



ATENEUM
HELSINKI - FINLAND

Eero Nelimarkka's (1891–1977) exhibition, covering the entire career, looks at the versatile artist with new eyes and sheds light on what kind of lens he looked at the world through. The artist's fascinating life story tells the journey from the Vaasa laundry worker's son to one of Finland's most popular artists.



Eero Nelimarkka is known as a painter of the landscapes of South Ostrobothnia, but he was also a particularly skilled photographer of man. Nelimarkka's production includes a wide variety of character photographs and a large number of self-portraits.

Until September 13, 2026

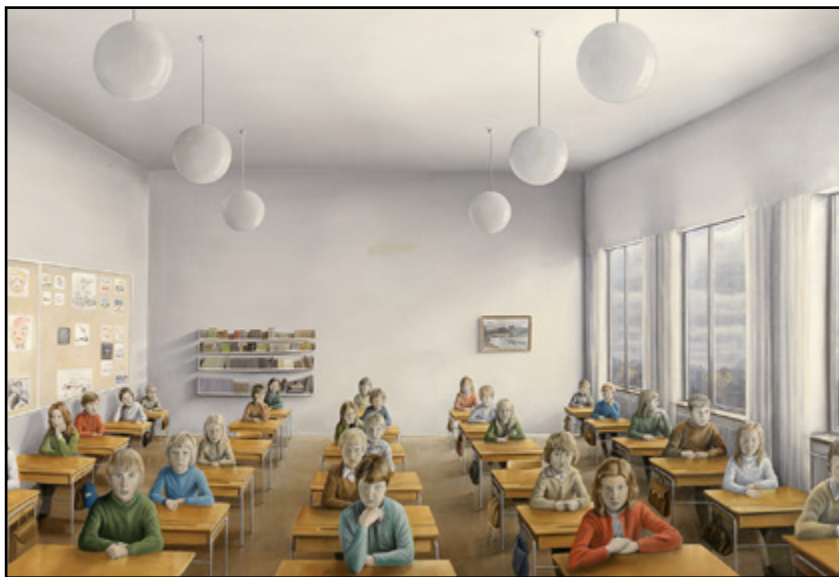
Will You Be Profitable, My Friend?



MODERNA MUSEET
STOCKHOLM - SWEDEN

The exhibition “Will You Be Profitable, My Friend?” presents Swedish art from 1945 to 1979 with works from the Moderna Museet Collection. Four turbulent decades that have left different imprints on art. Abstract idioms, expressive painting, and strong political stances from a period when the welfare state was taking shape, come together in the exhibition.

Until September 19, 2027



Frida: The Making of an Icon



TATE MODERN
LONDON - UK

Discover the extraordinary story of how Frida Kahlo became one of the most influential artists of all time, a cultural phenomenon, and an internationally recognised commercial icon.

Frida: The Making of an Icon will showcase over 30 of Kahlo's most iconic works that introduce her 'many selves' – the dedicated wife, the intellectual, the modern artist, and



the political activist. Alongside treasured garments, jewellery, photographs and memorabilia, there are over 200 works by her contemporaries and the artists she inspired from later generations, celebrating her lasting impact on those who continue to reimagine and reclaim her remarkable story.

Until January 3, 2027

Raoul Dufy



CENTRE POMPIDOU
PARIS - FRANCE

This retrospective (the first collaboration in the partnership between Les Franciscaines de Deauville and Centre Pompidou) is devoted to one of the most popular artists from the French scene in the first half of the 20th century. It pays tribute to the exceptionally diverse genius of Raoul Dufy (1877– 1953), which, far from being limited to easel painting alone, extends to drawing, engraving, ceramics and textile art.

Until September 20, 2026





AN ON TO ART

** Ovi in Finnish means door*



Ovi Thematic eMagazine

Issue 35 - August 2026

Justice vs. Judicature

Ovi Thematic/History eMagazines

Publications 2026

Design: Thanos



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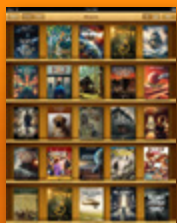
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